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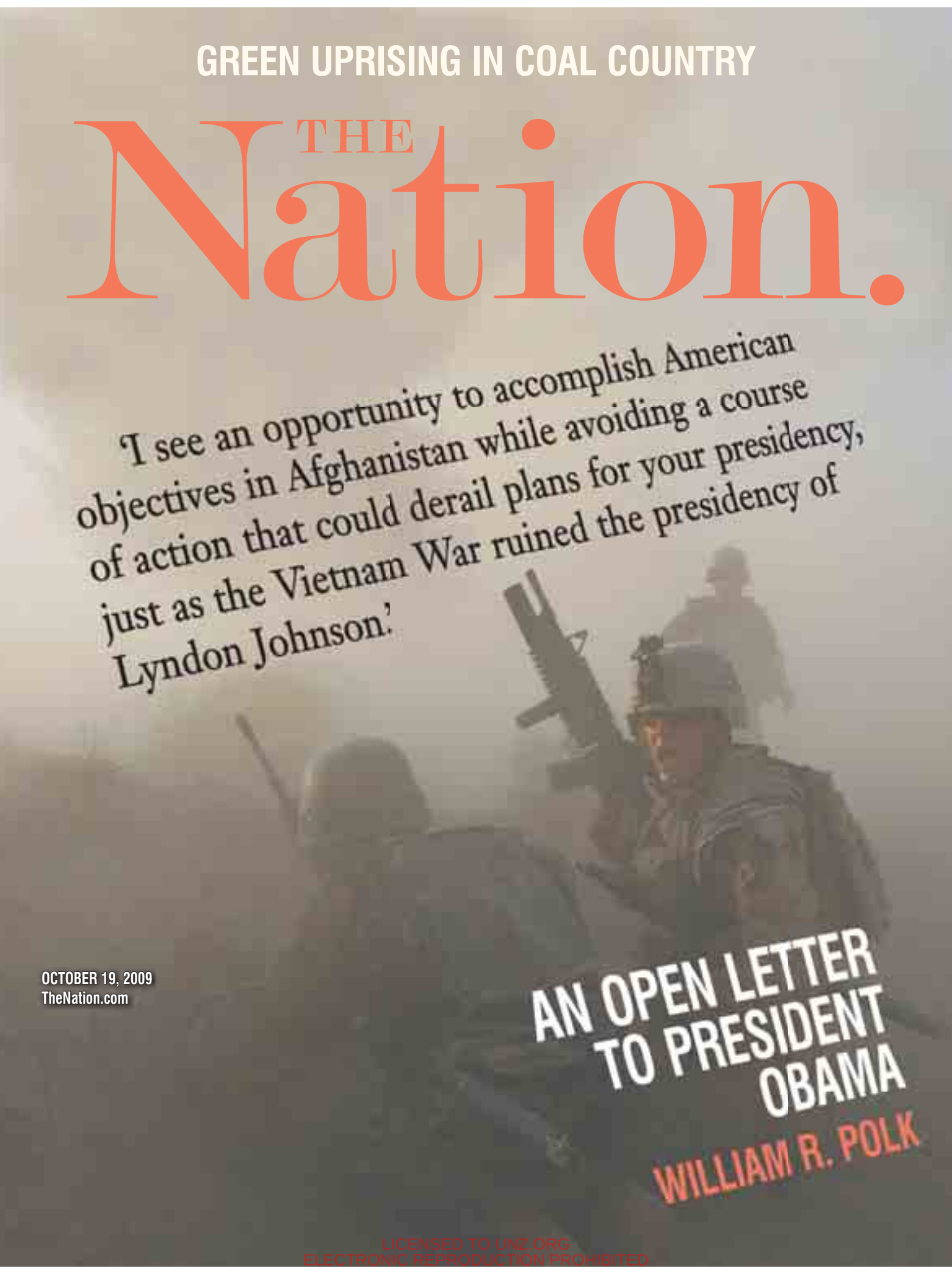
THE Nation.

'I see an opportunity to accomplish American objectives in Afghanistan while avoiding a course of action that could derail plans for your presidency, just as the Vietnam War ruined the presidency of Lyndon Johnson.'



OCTOBER 19, 2009
TheNation.com

AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA

WILLIAM R. POLK

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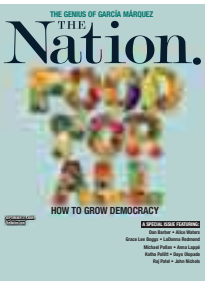
Letters



The Gates Foundation in Africa

SEATTLE

At the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, we believe an open exchange of ideas is essential to tackling urgent global challenges. Our approach to agricultural development recognizes hunger as a complex challenge with no single solution. It is unfortunate that Raj Patel et al., the authors of "Ending Africa's Hunger" [Sept. 21], chose to mischaracterize the foundation's strategy despite our detailed and frank conversations.

We support a broad range of solutions. In addition to quality seeds, small farmers need locally appropriate farming practices, access to markets and a policy environment that supports their success. We invest in all these areas. Environmental sustainability is critical for long-term impact, which is why we fund projects like micro-irrigation for efficient water use and planting legumes among other crops to fertilize the soil naturally. We also recently made a grant to Worldwatch Institute to undertake a comprehensive study of the highly complex intersection between the environment and agriculture.

Women do the majority of the farm work in Africa, so we have funded a major career development program for sub-Saharan women in agricultural research, and another to engage women farmers in agricultural policy development.

Our agricultural work is focused on helping small farmers to live healthier, more productive lives. The "uniquely African Green Revolution," called for by African leaders in 2004, recognizes that reducing hunger and poverty begins with such farmers and their families, and that is why we and our partners are working to ensure that their voices are heard and their needs are met. Ultimately, it will be up to countries and farmers themselves to decide what approaches are right for them. (See gatesfoundation.org/agriculturaldevelopment/Pages/default.aspx for a detailed overview of our agricultural development strategy.)

MARK SUZMAN
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

letters@thenation.com

Patel et al. Reply

OAKLAND, CALIF.

We agree that an open exchange about Africa's agricultural development, and the philanthropic interventions to shape it, is tremendously important. We welcome the chance to continue the debate here.

We're grateful that the Gates Foundation talked with us for over an hour in Seattle and responded to our questions on e-mail, but we note that there is nothing specific in our article with which it disagrees. Mark Suzman seems unhappy that we didn't faithfully reproduce the foundation's public relations materials, but that's not our job. Rather, we strove to put its projects in context, revealing the industrial connections the foundation fails to make evident on its website.

Yes, the Gates Foundation funds the planting of beans and micro-irrigation. But as a proportion of disbursement, these projects are marginal to the technological investments in the development of genetically modified crops. That is why we couldn't in good conscience report the more trivial examples as representative of the organization's broader thrust.

We're happy to add Worldwatch Institute to the list of organizations the foundation funds. We're disappointed, however, that in choosing to fund it, the foundation did not consult with the farmers' organizations and NGOs in Africa, which for years have been doing excellent agro-ecological work raising production, reducing environmental costs and improving livelihoods. The complex links between agriculture and the environment have been extensively documented and peer-reviewed. Wouldn't the money have been better spent on the dissemination of this proven knowledge within Africa?

We agree that it will ultimately be up to farmers to decide what is best for them. Our concern, however, is that farmers' choices are systematically skewed, with some ideas amplified over others. Policies that involve redistribution—such as land reform—are off the foundation's agenda, despite being a live

(continued on page 24)

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Against Escalation

In the next few weeks, Barack Obama will make a decision that will define his presidency. Will he escalate the war in Afghanistan, sending 40,000 additional US soldiers to reinforce the 68,000 already there to engage in an open-ended, nation-building counterinsurgency mission? Or will he redefine US objectives and ask his advisers to craft an alternative strategy? Two events intended to bolster the case for the former—Afghanistan's August 20 presidential election and Gen. Stanley McChrystal's August 30 assessment of the war—have instead demonstrated the wisdom of the latter. Perhaps more crucial, the events have raised opposition to and uncertainty about escalation from leaders across the foreign policy and national security establishment, creating a rare opportunity for the administration to shift course and save face.

EDITORIAL

Opponents of escalation now include conservative columnist George Will, who editorialized in favor of withdrawal in the September 1 *Washington Post*, as well as Senators Richard Durbin, Russ Feingold and Carl Levin, chair of the Armed Services Committee. Meanwhile, Senators Dianne Feinstein, Jack Reed and John Kerry, chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, have weighed in with pointed skepticism about the cost and terms of escalation. Kerry, in a September 27 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, called for a "fuller debate about what constitutes success in Afghanistan," citing former Secretary of State Colin Powell's mantra, What's the exit strategy? For his part, Powell has reportedly warned the president of the need for a clearly defined military mission. And another career military man, Army chief of staff George Casey, has reportedly expressed concern about the drain on military resources.

Afghanistan's recent election revealed the fraud, corruption and unpopularity of the US-backed regime. But it is McChrystal's report that raises the gravest doubts. Although it maintains that "success is still achievable," the daunting challenges it identifies should lead foreign policy realists to conclude the exact opposite. Among the obstacles it cites are: "the weakness of state institutions," "widespread corruption and abuse of power," a "crisis of confidence among Afghans," the growing influence of insurgent groups backed by narcotrafficking and/or the Pakistani government, and the operational culture of foreign forces there, which poorly understand Afghan social, political, economic and cultural affairs. McChrystal plans to integrate US troops into Afghan units. With this strategy, he concludes, it "is realistic to expect that Afghan and coalition casualties will increase."

Are Americans willing to pay that price? What is the goal of a counterinsurgency mission? How will "victory" be measured? These are the questions that should dominate the debate. There are, of course, many other moral, political and strategic reasons to oppose escalation, including the hundreds of billions it could cost. And there are plans for withdrawal that would shift US involvement to regional diplomacy and development, targeted counterterrorism and intelligence sharing, such as one offered by William Polk on page 11 and the exit strategy proposed by Representative Jim McGovern, which has garnered ninety-eight supporters in the House. For now, however, the administration should be pushed hard to explain the purpose and logic of increasing US involvement. Until it does, any escalation has failed the very test Obama established: "absolute clarity about what the strategy is going to be."

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This week at TheNation.com

News & Analysis

John Nichols, Adam Howard: Can the public option be saved?

Arundhati Roy: What have we done to democracy?

Dave Zirin: Fighting homophobia in the NFL

Blogs: Melissa Harris-Lacewell: Lose the hate, keep the hope

Poll: What should Obama focus on in negotiating with Iran?

Calendar: Post your event

Web Letters: Express yourself!

Israel vs. Human Rights

In his speech to the United Nations General Assembly, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vigorously took up the country's latest strategy for responding to allegations of human rights abuses: kill the messenger. He denounced a recent report by the UN's Human Rights Council that had accused Israel of possible crimes against humanity during its assault on Gaza last winter, calling it a "travesty," a "farce" and a "perversion." The Hamas terrorists Israel was up against had committed acts akin in history only to the Nazi blitz of British civilians during World War II, Netanyahu asserted. Indeed, in denying a nation's right to resist attack, the report sought to undermine Israel's "legitimacy."

COMMENT

The head of the UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, Judge Richard Goldstone, was "upset" by the speech. "It is disingenuous, to put it lightly, what Netanyahu said," he told *The Nation*. "The idea that this is aimed at delegitimating the state of Israel—that is the last thing I would want to do." Goldstone, a Jew and a Zionist, said that Israel's leaders were behaving contemptuously, "ignoring the specific allegations and simply launching a broadside."

Those broadsides began not long after the ascension of the right-wing Netanyahu government in March, when his ministers began painting human rights and peace groups as a fifth column for terrorists. "For the first time the Israeli government is taking an active role in the smearing of human rights groups," says Sarah Leah Whitson of Human Rights Watch.

Traditionally that job had gone to Israel's friends. The executive director of AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, for instance, condemned human rights groups this past spring as part of an international "campaign" to dehumanize the Jewish state to the point where "Israel stands alone, isolated and at risk." But as one international report after another accused Israel of war crimes during the Gaza assault, the Israeli government joined the fight. The government refused to cooperate with Goldstone's investigation, forcing him to enter Gaza from Egypt. Israeli witnesses had to be flown to Geneva to be interviewed.

The Israeli government has also sought to quash domestic dissent. In April it targeted the anti-militarism organization New Profile, seizing computers and detaining activists. In July, when a group of Israeli veterans called Breaking the Silence released dozens of anonymous soldiers' testimonies from the Gaza assault describing indifference to civilian targets, the Israeli government went, well, ballistic. It threatened to cut off the financial support the group receives from the Dutch, Spanish and British governments and warned those governments that their support was illegal. Israel indicated that it would look into foreign support that Israeli human rights groups B'Tselem and Machsom Watch receive as well.

Ron Dermer, a Netanyahu adviser who was raised in Florida, struck a fearsome tone: "We are going to dedicate time and manpower to combating these groups. We are not going to be sitting ducks in a pond for the human rights groups to shoot at us with impunity."

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Noted.

AFGHAN ACTIONS: October 7 will mark the eighth anniversary of the US invasion of Afghanistan. As Obama considers whether to send additional troops into the conflict, activists across the United States are using the month to call for an end to the war. Here are some actions you can take to demand a sensible policy from the Obama administration and a swift and safe resolution to the war.

The **War Resisters League** (warresisters.org) is organizing protests on October 5 in Washington and October 7 in New York to "surge peace and development and justice, not war and troops." **Peace Action** (peaceforafghanistan.org) is helping activists nationwide organize "Out of Afghanistan" house parties, where hosts can screen *Rethink Afghanistan*, the new documentary by filmmaker **Robert Greenwald**, and bring together concerned citizens from their area for a discussion of the future of US involvement.

Code Pink is collecting signatures for a petition on the "Women Say No to War!" portion of its website, which calls for a speedy and humane end to military engagement in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. CodePink4Peace.org also features a calendar of upcoming antiwar events and lectures focusing on peace and international women's rights. **MoveOn.org** is calling on its more than 5 million members to e-mail the president and demand a plan to get troops out of Afghanistan as soon as possible, to let Obama know "we need an exit strategy—not tens of thousands more troops stuck in a quagmire."

And on the night of the anniversary, the **American Friends Service Committee** and **United for Peace and Justice** are organizing candlelight vigils across the country to demand dialogue and development in Afghanistan—instead of more foreign troops. ELISABETH GARBER-PAUL

LONE STAR LEGACY: **Molly Ivins** used to joke about writing a history of the civil rights movement in East Texas with the title "No One Famous Ever Came." While the great struggles of the 1960s in other Southern states drew national attention, the more complex but no less bitter battles to end discrimination against African-Americans and Latinos in Texas tend to be forgotten. Perhaps that is why the September 23 death of Texas liberal **Don Yarborough** at 83 earned less attention than was deserved. In 1962, when most Southern liberals were preaching caution on civil rights, Yarborough's campaign for the Texas Democratic gubernatorial nomination promised to end discrimination, respect the rule of law and break the rule of the oil-monied elites.

Yarborough's coalition of minorities, union members and Austin liberals came within 27,000 votes of upsetting conservative Democrat **John Connally**. And the prospect that Yarborough might beat Connally in the 1964 primary brought President **John F. Kennedy** to Dallas in November 1963 to heal rifts within the party. Yarborough lost in '64 and again in '68, but the broad appeal of his homegrown progressivism was sufficient to inspire the next generation of Texas liberals—**Ann Richards**, **Jim Hightower** and **Lloyd Doggett**, among others—to wrestle the state Democratic Party from the right and eventually win the governorship and other key posts. That's Yarborough's legacy: when no one famous came, he and his fellow Texas liberals built a progressive populist coalition that lingers to this day. JOHN NICHOLS

PITTSBURGH POLICE STATE: Not a day had passed since the close of the **Pittsburgh G-20** on September 25 before local officials began boasting of a job well done. But anti–G-20 groups and their lawyers are saying "not so fast" and beginning to lay the groundwork for lawsuits against the city for police misconduct. Asked to characterize Pittsburgh police tactics, the ACLU's **Witold Walczak** was direct: "martial law."

During the summit, 6,000 law enforcement personnel were mobilized, including 2,000 from the National Guard. Demonstrators faced a harsh, albeit predictable array of police tactics and munitions. City officials denied permits to protest groups or granted them only at the last minute. Only one rally was allowed to pass close to the summit, a "people's march" on September 25 that drew an estimated 5,000 participants. Unpermitted marches on the evenings of September 24 and 25 were met with volleys of tear gas, rubber bullets and beanbag rounds, and, for the first reported time in the United States, a Long Range Acoustic Device—a weapon often used by militaries that can unleash a shrill sound that its manufacturer warns could cause permanent hearing loss.

"Use of that weapon is just asking for an excessive-use-of-force claim, especially if someone incurs injuries," Walczak said.

Overall, police arrested 190 people, many of whom were curious bystanders during the unpermitted rally on September 25 at the University of Pittsburgh. The ACLU is investigating with an eye toward litigating claims of excessive force and unconstitutional orders to disperse lawful protesters. ROBERT ESHELMAN

STUDENTS TO THE SENATE: On September 17 the House passed 253 to 171 the **Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act**. Although it falls short of a real bailout for students, it would "end the billions upon billions of dollars in unwarranted subsidies that we hand out to banks and financial institutions," as President Obama puts it. By eliminating federally guaranteed private loans and lending directly to students, the government would save an estimated $87 billion over the next decade, which would be invested back into education, including a $40 billion increase in Pell Grants.

The bill split Representatives overwhelmingly down party lines, so as it moves to the Senate the bill may be in the hands of a few uncooperative Democrats like Nebraskan **Ben Nelson**, whose top campaign contributor is student lender **Nelnet**. The Senate vote is expected sometime in October. **Campus Progress** is set for the challenge, planning a "Raising Pell Week of Action" for October 6–8, when it will be mobilizing students to fax, call and (of course) tweet their senators.

"It's definitely going to be harder to pass this through the Senate," says **Pedro de la Torre III** of Campus Progress. "But we're optimistic. In our minds, it's pure common sense.… But with the lenders engaging in their shenanigans, it's very important to get involved." ANDREA D'CRUZ

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Shooting back meant calling out New York–based Human Rights Watch for raising money in Arab countries, an anti-Arab theme that was echoed in a September attack on Human Rights Watch published by the Jerusalem-based advocacy group NGO Monitor. The critique listed staff members who are allegedly "anti-Israel," with some of the charges as flimsy as the fact that an official had been on the board of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. And as Judge Goldstone found, the Israeli government has refused to cooperate with Human Rights Watch investigations. "Over the last year they have not wanted to meet with us, even when we've presented them with very, very detailed questions about IDF conduct based on preliminary investigations," says program director Iain Levine.

Of course, Palestinian human rights activists are familiar with stonewalling, and much worse. A March 2006 UN report criticized the Israel Defense Forces for the "systematic targeting of peace and human rights activists" and noted that Israel seemed to use administrative detention to deter human rights work. That policy was underscored in September, when Israel arrested Mohammad Othman, a human rights activist, after a visit to Norway, where he had pushed for boycott, divestment and sanctions.

The impetus for the new Israeli strategy appears to be fear of shifting international opinion. As analyst Michael Wahid Hanna of the Century Foundation puts it, Goldstone's stunning findings may well "take on a life of their own…and make diplomatic life much more tricky." The Netanyahu government is counting on the United States to block a potential UN Security Council recommendation for an international war crimes tribunal and has warned the Obama administration that the Goldstone report can only hinder the peace process. Certainly human rights reports have emboldened Israel's critics. Just two days after the release of the report, the British Trade Union Congress, representing more than 6.5 million workers, endorsed the boycott movement against Israel, explaining that the decision was "the culmination of a wave of motions passed at union conferences this year, following outrage at Israel's brutal war on Gaza."

We are used to accounting for the costs of the Israeli occupation in concrete terms: so many checkpoints, so many colonies, so many dead civilians. The new Israeli effort suggests an even larger cost: that of the very idea of human rights. The government has yet to question one factual allegation Goldstone has made, says progressive Zionist blogger Jerry Haber. "Israel's only recourse, after it violates the rights of Palestinians, is to deny that such rights exist."

ADAM HOROWITZ AND PHILIP WEISS

Adam Horowitz and Philip Weiss are the editors of the website Mondoweiss, which covers the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Thoughts of a UN Delegate as Qaddafi's Speech, Slotted for Fifteen Minutes, Approaches An Hour and a Half

This Muammar is truly loony.
If he can't stop this ranting soon, he
May drive us all to flee pell-mell.
I'd rather listen to Fidel.

Rethinking Government

COMMENT

In his September speech on healthcare to a joint session of Congress, President Obama invoked the spirit of Ted Kennedy to make some modest steps toward almost, sorta, kinda saying that maybe we ought to rethink the role of government. Unfortunately, since taking office Obama has largely reinforced the conservative "brand" made so popular by Ronald Reagan. In explicitly discussing the role of government in a recent *Meet the Press* appearance, Obama offered a juxtaposition that would have made Reagan proud: "How do we balance freedom with our need to look after one another?" In fact, perhaps the biggest difference between progressives and conservatives is that one believes that government inherently infringes on freedom and the other believes that government creates the conditions for it.

If there was a silver lining to the state of the union Obama inherited from his predecessor, it was that George W. Bush and the Republicans had so thoroughly discredited the ideology of unregulated greed and hands-off government in matters of financial security that at no time since 1933 was the public more ready for a new narrative about what government should and shouldn't do. Americans were so frightened and angry about what was happening to their 401(k)s, their housing values (if they still had a home), their health insurance (if they still had or could afford it), their inability to know which of their kids' Chinese toys was filled with lead, and the fine print in their credit card bills that they were ready for a progressive alternative to the mantra "Government is the problem, not the solution."

There is probably still time to begin offering that narrative. But the president needs to recognize that the pragmatic problem-solving that Americans so desperately want from their government presupposes a coherent narrative about the role of government. And he needs to recognize that the direction that problem-solving takes us (e.g., either toward healthcare reform that cuts into the profits of pharmaceutical and insurance companies and offers some variant of Medicare as at least one choice to people under 65, or toward reform that taxes and ultimately eliminates the better plans offered to working Americans by their employers) depends on which narrative you offer.

It isn't hard to construct one (FDR wrote a pretty good rough draft), but the president needs to tell it—and tell it over and over, until it can compete with the well-branded conservative narrative. A progressive narrative that could move the political center

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the way Roosevelt did isn't that difficult to tell: we've been told for years that we face a choice between the free market (capitalism) and tyrannical government (socialism), when that's not our choice at all. The choice is between unregulated greed, which leaves none of us free, and responsible, effective leadership that protects our freedom. We just saw what happens when we embrace the ideology of unregulated greed—the idea that if we just trust our financial futures to big businesses pursuing *their* interests, we'll all end up better off. If you want to lose your financial security, your job, your house and your healthcare, it's a great ideology. We just relearned the lesson of our grandparents, who lived through a time when Republicans preached the same philosophy in the run-up to the Great Depression.

The alternative to government for the sake of big business isn't government for the sake of big government. It's government for the average person, who actually creates prosperity by working for a living. No one doubts that we need government to protect our national security. But what we just learned so painfully is that we also need government to protect our financial security—just the way we need government to protect the quality of our air, our drinking water and our bridges and levees. And it's no different for energy, education or healthcare.

Sometimes the best role of government is to partner with business (e.g., to invest in wind and solar energy, so we're not at the mercy of governments that are hostile to us). Sometimes it's to regulate it (e.g., to prevent Wall Street sharks from using our money to speculate away our security—and then expecting us to bail them out and pay them bonuses for their bad judgment). Sometimes it's to compete with big business to make sure the "free market" is really free and competitive and that it extends opportunity and prosperity to all (e.g., in higher education, where our public universities are not only some of the best in the nation but the most affordable, and in healthcare, where the best way to keep insurance companies honest is to make them compete with a plan or two that they don't get to control). Sometimes it's all of the above, and sometimes it's none of the above.

There isn't a piece of progressive legislation the president can pass without making unnecessary concessions to a weak but determined opposition, and without creating tensions within his own party and unnecessarily losing seats in 2010—*unless* he enunciates an alternative vision of government. Our founders believed we could govern ourselves effectively, and that doing so was the precondition of freedom. Let's prove them right.

DREW WESTEN

Drew Westen, professor of psychology and psychiatry at Emory University, is the founder of Westen Strategies and author of The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation *(PublicAffairs).*

Chávez Talks to *The Nation*

Three years ago, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez caused a stir when, in a speech to the UN General Assembly, he called President George W. Bush the devil. "I can still smell the sulfur," he said, standing at the same podium where, a day earlier, Bush had given his own address. In September Chávez once again followed a US president onto the UN podium, but this time he caught a whiff of something different—"the smell of hope."

In an interview conducted at Venezuela's UN mission in New York, Chávez talked with our frequent Latin America correspondent Greg Grandin about Barack Obama as well as about the Honduran crisis, US plans to extend the Pentagon's presence in Colombia, Chávez's domestic successes and challenges, and the legacy of Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

About the new president, Chávez said, "It seems as if there are two Barack Obamas. And hopefully, the Obama who spoke today at the United Nations will win out in the end. But it was Obama who also approved the seven military bases in Colombia. So Obama is full of contradictions, and hopefully the people of the United States, you, the thinking public, need to push your president.… Obama can be an opportunity, and you need to support him with great force, in order to contain those that ferociously oppose change."

About Venezuela, Chávez said, "We are leaving behind—slowly but steadily, not in a day, a year or five years—oil dependency, advancing the industrialization of the country. If some people believe—people of good faith, readers of *The Nation*—that the Bolivarian Revolution is exhausted, tell them it isn't. You can tell them to come and see for themselves. Venezuela is, of course, a country that has problems, and its revolutionary government has failures, and has made mistakes, but it has an ongoing process. We have achieved nearly all the Millennium Development Goals."

Chávez hailed "the new winds blowing from South America, the winds of change, I would say even winds of revolution. It is different from the revolution of the 1970s. This one is carried out not with rifles but by a peaceful people. It is a democratic revolution."

For the full interview, go to TheNation.com.

NATION NOTE

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Barry Schwabsky as *The Nation*'s art critic. Barry has been writing about art for the magazine since 2005, and his essays have appeared in many other publications, including *Flash Art* (Milan), *Artforum*, the *London Review of Books* and *Art in America*. His books include *The Widening Circle: Consequences of Modernism in Contemporary Art*, *Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting* and several volumes of poetry. Writing on an impressive range of subjects—from Pierre Bonnard to Kara Walker, from Diego Velázquez to Jess—Barry has displayed a lightness of touch matched by a discerning eye. At home in the studio as much as at an opening, attentive to technique and form as much as to art's place within and outside the museum's walls, Barry writes essays and reviews that are enthusiastic invitations to readers to look over his shoulder and see art anew.

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Alexander Cockburn

Same as It Ever Was: Talking Head in Pittsburgh

Obama is by nature a booster—like the first stage of a missile lofting its payload into the upper atmosphere. A huge bang, a mighty whoosh and then, a few miles up, a fizzle as the Obama-booster burns out and drops back to earth. He doesn't seem to have much stamina or even strategy for getting useful things done. No wonder he leaped on the "secret Iranian nuclear facility." It was a perfect setup up for a booster.

Half-close our eyes and we could have been back in Bush-time, amid the ripest hours of the propaganda barrage for the US-led onslaught on Iraq. (Though this time the venue was the G-20 summit in Pittsburgh, not the UN General Assembly, since Obama wanted to reserve that for a message of uplift.) Theme: disclosure of fresh, chilling evidence of the duplicity of a pariah nation and of the threat it poses to the civilized world. Then it was Secretary of State Colin Powell obediently dispensing lies and blatant forgeries about Iraq's WMDs. On September 25, it was Obama flanked by his Euro-puppets, rolling out alarms that were relayed to the world by a compliant press, albeit sometimes with sidebars puncturing the essential claims. Within minutes of Obama's Pittsburgh ambush, the White House's scenario about a terrifying new nuke factory near Qom began to crumble; a few days later, it was rubble.

US intelligence knew about the mountainside site back in Bush-time. Work had started on it, then stopped. Obama was briefed about it during the transition. Last spring, US surveillance—from satellites and maybe from spies on the ground—concluded that the plant's construction was nearly complete. US intelligence then supposedly learned that the Iranians knew the plant was under US observation. Of course they did. Who doesn't know about American eyes in the skies?

Both Iran and the United States were planning a disclosure schedule matching their political needs. Iran's letter of notification to the IAEA was probably timed to strengthen the theocracy's domestic position and Iran's hand in the upcoming Geneva talks. Claims that Iran violated its obligations under the nonproliferation treaty and subsequent annexes are questionable at best and will give international legal experts plump incomes for decades. One of the United States' tactics has been to rearrange the legal requirements of the treaty, then to insist that each new arrogant stipulation is retroactive. Iran naturally objects to this and responds with dense legal barrages, some depending on whether or not the Iranian Parliament ratified the successive amendments to the treaty. Its case is pretty good—certainly a hundred times stronger than Obama's wild accusations, dutifully echoed by his equerries, Sarkozy and Brown. The most persuasive outline of the legal issues comes from Los Angeles–based Muhammad Sahimi, on the (anti-theocracy) site for *Frontline*'s Tehran bureau.

In reality, the public disclosure of something the United States knew about years ago—knowledge it shared with its prime NATO allies and Israel—changes nothing. The consensus of US intelligence remains that there is no hard evidence that Iran is actively seeking to manufacture nuclear weapons. Iran has agreed to inspection of the plant at some appropriate point.

In a larger perspective there's the absurdity of Obama thundering against Iran, which signed the nuclear nonproliferation treaty and has allowed inspections, while remaining silent about Israel. That country has refused to sign the nonproliferation treaty, has an arsenal of somewhere around 200 nuclear weapons about which it has been serially deceptive for nearly half a century and has adamantly refused all inspections. Behind Obama, discoursing on nuclear responsibility, were Sarkozy and Brown, whose nuclear subs collided in the Atlantic in February 2009.

Obama's policy remains in sync with that of his predecessor in the White House. Spasms of ferocious bluster toward Iran raise public anxiety. Stories about imminent Israeli raids on Iran are balanced by leaks to the effect that the White House is keeping Israel on a leash. Then sanctions on Iran are tightened. These strengthen the hand of the theocracy, which can put extra muscle into its repression on the grounds that the country is under siege. What other effect do they have? Professor R.T. Naylor of McGill University, who has written *Economic Warfare*, a book on sanctions, tells me, "Iran, of course, has had US sanctions against it before, without any sign that much happened. Of its exports to the US, the main thing was always the profits US firms earned on corrupt contracts, so this was a classic case of the US shooting itself in the foot in those early sanctions. Also, Iran stopped putting its oil surpluses in US banks." California is growing more pistachios, caviar comes from Russia and a lot of other countries are knocking off Iranian styles and patterns in carpets.

Meanwhile, the supposedly rational president is already having to pay the bills for his reckless boosterism, during his campaign, of a wider war in Afghanistan. Anyone wanting to understand how JFK plunged into the Vietnamese quagmire, and how LBJ got in even deeper, has only to follow the current fight over Afghan policy. Insanity effortlessly trumps common sense.

By general agreement, the situation in Afghanistan is rapidly getting worse. Militarily, the Taliban have been doing very well, helped by America's bizarre policy of assassinating members of the Taliban high command by drones, thus allowing vigorous young commanders to step into senior positions.

Alas, we have a booster president who turns out to have painfully few fixed principles but an enthusiasm for news management that gives him high ratings but that leaves more and more sensible people wondering if he has any constructive long-term strategy to lower tensions and reduce the likely prospect of savage bloodletting across the Middle East. The passing months have been brutally unkind to such expectations. ■

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Katha Pollitt

Are You Happy?

Am I happy? What a stupid question. Do you mean happy as in content? Joyful? Hopeful? Relieved? Counting my blessings? Intent on absorbing work? Depending on your definition—and when you ask me, and who you are—I could give a dozen different answers. If you really want to know how I feel about my life, you would have to get to know me and ask me a whole lot of particular questions, which could not necessarily be boiled down to a single answer, and could certainly not be used to compare my happiness with someone else's—because how can anyone know if what I mean by happiness is what that other person means? Keats was happy when he wrote "Ode to a Nightingale," Eichmann was happy when he met his daily quota of murdered Jews, and I am happy to be living this year in Berlin. Only a pollster (or an economist) would conflate these things. In fact, only a pollster would think that people tell pollsters the truth.

But why let quibbles stand in the way of a chance to attack feminism? The Huffington Post has sparked a national blatherfest with a series of posts by self-help guru Marcus Buckingham, which Arianna, in her trademark breathless fashion, blurbs as "the sad, shocking truth about how women are feeling." Relying on "The Paradox of Declining Female Happiness," an analysis of General Social Survey data by Wharton's Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, Buckingham claims that women are less happy than they used to be, are less happy than men and become increasingly unhappy as they get older. These results, he claims, are independent of whether women are rich or poor, married or single, work or stay home. As he puts it, "though women now have the liberty to choose whichever life they'd like, many are struggling in their pursuit of a *happy life*." Maureen Dowd concurs that the problem is that women have too many choices—"a paradox, indeed." Huffington, Buckingham and Dowd are late to the party, actually: Ross Douthat devoted his *New York Times* column to the subject back in May. His culprit? Increased acceptance of single motherhood. Bring back "social stigma"—for women's own good.

Using a single statistic as a peg for your pet theory is a game we all can play. But before you leap in with your own, consider this: the actual differences, which Buckingham et al. present as enormous, are tiny. As U Penn professor and blogger Mark Liberman sets it out on Language Log, in 1972-74, 31.9 percent of men said they were very happy, 53 percent said they were pretty happy and 15.1 percent said they were not too happy; among women, the corresponding figures were 37 percent, 49.4 percent and 13.6 percent. For 2004, 2006 and 2008, 29.8 percent of men said they were very happy, 56.1 percent were pretty happy and 14 percent were not too happy; for women it was 31.2, 54.9 and 13.9. In other words, women today self-report a bit less manic joy than three decades ago, as do men, and a bit more modified rapture. But women still say they are happier than do men, contrary to journalistic rumor; and, most important, both in the 1970s and the 2000s, more than eight in ten women and men said they were very or fairly happy. The percentage of "not too happy" men has declined by 1.1 percent, and the percentage of such women has increased by a great big 0.3 percent. Three additional women in a thousand: that's what the fuss over "women's unhappiness" is all about.

There are plenty of possible reasons why more people in recent years would report slightly less happiness than thirty years ago. Perhaps people are more lonely—all those hours in front of screens. Perhaps it's the stressed-out economy, or over-the-top consumerism, or increased inequality, or having George Bush as president, or less leisure time. Or maybe Americans define happiness a bit differently from the way they did in 1972—or are simply becoming a bit more honest. After all, somebody is taking all those legal and illegal mood-elevating drugs, and going to all those therapists, and buying all those books about how to cheer up, like, um, *Find Your Strongest Life: What the Happiest and Most Successful Women Do Differently* by Marcus Buckingham. From the information given, there is no way to tell. Nor is it possible to say, simply by looking at the self-reports of men and women over time, what role feminism plays, if any. After all, women moving into higher education and the workforce is not the only thing that has happened in the past thirty years. If you want to play ridiculous numbers games, it could be that feminist gains have made women 10 percent happier, but something else—the fraying of the safety net, the turbo-charged misogyny of pop culture, reading too many self-help books—has canceled it out. You just can't say. You can, however, safely dismiss those like Buckingham who pooh-pooh the argument that women's "second shift" at home is to blame because men are doing more. OK, but last time I looked, more was not half. As Dr. Johnson said in another context, If you're going to calculate, calculate.

None of these possibilities have prevented readers from deluging the *Times* and the Huffington Post with tut-tuts and I-told-you-so's to uppity women. But how happy were women, really, in that golden pre-feminist era? Culture critic Caryl Rivers pointed out to me that in 1973, studies showing that married women had the highest levels of psychiatric problems, including depression and anxiety, prompted sociologist Jessie Bernard to declare marriage a "health hazard for women." If that's no longer true, why not give feminism some credit?

As for those still sky-high levels of good cheer, I'm skeptical. People answering yes to a pollster's question about happiness is like saying, "Fine, thanks" when someone asks, "How are you?" If it actually represents a truthful and considered answer, either Americans have entirely given up following the news or the Prozac is working. ■

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Dear Mr. President,

Although we were separated by more than a decade, we lived a few steps apart in Hyde Park and were both professors at the University of Chicago. There I established the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and was also president of the Adlai Stevenson Institute of International Affairs. Before going to Chicago, during the Kennedy administration I was the member of the Policy Planning Council responsible for the Middle East and Central Asia. A Democrat, I was an early supporter of yours. So I hope you will accept the following analysis and proposals as being from a friend as well as a person with considerable experience on Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In recent events I see an opportunity to accomplish American objectives while avoiding a course of action that could derail plans for your presidency, just as the Vietnam War ruined the presidency of Lyndon Johnson.

According to press accounts, you are being told that America can win the war against the Taliban by employing overwhelming military power. Just like President Johnson's generals, yours keep asking for more troops. You are also being told that we can multiply our power with counterinsurgency tactics. Having made a detailed study (laid out in my book *Violent Politics*) of a dozen insurgencies, ranging from the American Revolution to Afghanistan, and fought by the British, French, Germans and Russians in America, Europe, Africa and Asia, I doubt that you are being well advised. When I was in government, we were told we could achieve victory in Vietnam by the same combination of force and counterinsurgency recommended by your advisers in Afghanistan. But as the editors of the Pentagon Papers concluded, the "attempt to translate the newly articulated theory of counter-insurgency into operational reality.… [through] a mixture of military, social, psychological, economic and political measures.… [were] marked by consistency in results as well as in techniques: all failed dismally."

What actually brought all the insurgencies, including the one in Vietnam, to a halt was the withdrawal of the foreigners. Some foreigners left in defeat, but others left in ways that achieved their most important objectives. I believe you have an opportunity to achieve America's important objectives in Afghanistan.

In Vietnam we never understood the Vietnamese and were defeated; so here I lay out the essential features of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Kashmir and then show how they set the context for a successful policy. I begin with Pakistan.

Pakistan has long been obsessed with Kashmir, frightened of India and favorably inclined toward its Pashtun ethnic minority. To help Pashtun "freedom fighters" in the 1979–89 war against the Soviet Union, we funneled billions of dollars into Pakistan. Opposition to the Soviet Union was our motivation, but Pakistan had a different motivation: to protect Islam. This necessarily involved it not only in Afghanistan but also in Kashmir. Since Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, is about as close to the Indian-held capital of Kashmir, Srinagar, and to the Khyber Pass, which leads into Afghanistan, as New York is to Hartford, both Afghanistan and Kashmir appear to the Pakistanis to be nearly domestic issues.

Kashmir is one of those legacies of the age of imperialism that still blight international relations. Today's problem was created in 1846, when the British sold Kashmir and its Muslim population to a Hindu who became its maharaja. Cruel and rapacious, he and his descendants were bitterly hated by Kashmiris. When the British were leaving South Asia in 1947, they assumed that because the people were mainly Muslim, Kashmir would be folded into what became Pakistan. But the maharaja opted for India. Despite a promise from Jawaharlal Nehru, then prime minister–designate of India, to Lord Louis Mountbatten, then viceroy of India, that a plebiscite would be held to ascertain the wishes of the Kashmiris, it has never been held. Ever since, the Indians have occupied Kashmir with half a million troops as a conquered enemy country. Under Indian rule, thousands of Kashmiris have been imprisoned, hundreds "disappeared" and almost everyone afflicted by lesser tyrannies. In shorthand terms, Kashmir is the Palestine of Central/South Asia. Pakistan and India have fought three wars and innumerable bloody engagements over Kashmir. The drain on the resources of both India and Pakistan has been immense. In part because of the destabilizing effects of this conflict, Pakistan has never

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developed a durable, coherent government. The only really solid Pakistani organization is the army. Civilian governments have been marked by massive corruption, ineptitude and fragility.

There are many reasons for Pakistan's problems, but one stands out: it is an amalgam of ethnic/cultural nations. The British ruled the Punjab and Sind directly, but sought merely to divide and weaken the Pashtuns. That was the purpose of the Durand Line, which they drew in 1893 along the mountainous frontier. The effect of the line is that today about 25 million Pashtuns live in Pakistan and roughly 14 million live in Afghanistan. The Pashtuns wanted to form an independent nation-state in 1947 but were prevented from doing so. Until its recent military campaign against the Taliban in Swat, the Pakistanis made little attempt to integrate the Pashtuns, but because of them Pakistan has always been deeply affected by Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has always baffled foreign invaders. After three attempts from 1842 to 1919 to rule it, the British gave up; at the end of a decade of costly war, the Russians did as well. Neither understood the complex social and political makeup of the country. Without doing so, we cannot hope to accomplish our objectives, so let me highlight the main points.

When I first went to Afghanistan, in 1962, to prepare a US National Policy Paper, I found a good analogy for the land and the society to be a rocky hill sliced by gullies and covered by 20,000 Ping-Pong balls. The balls represented the autonomous village-states. Politically and economically divided, they shared a common adherence to a blend of primitive Islam and even more primitive tribal custom (varying throughout the country but known in the south as Pashtunwali). During their occupation, the Russians crushed many Ping-Pong balls, but they could not defeat enough of them to win. At any given time, roughly 80 percent of the country remained outside Russian control; so the Russians won all the battles but lost the war. Afghanistan became the graveyard of the Soviet Union.

The brutal Soviet occupation shattered the Afghan social structure. Nearly one in ten Afghans was killed or died, and more than 5 million fled the country. Living wretchedly in refugee camps, mainly in Pakistan, hundreds of thousands of young Afghan men were "reshaped." Like the biblical Children of Israel after forty years in the wilderness, these Afghans emerged very different from their fathers. The new generation kept their stern code of belief, but they lost touch with the humanizing aspects of growing up in families. Living apart from mothers and sisters, many of the young men, mostly Pashtuns, were incorporated into male-only madrassas in which they were housed, fed, armed and radicalized. They emerged as the foot soldiers of the Taliban.

When they were in power, the Taliban enforced an ugly, repressive regime, but it was no worse than some other regimes in Asia and Africa. And, as we can observe, societies and regimes evolve. Look at what has happened in postwar Vietnam. No one in my time in government could have guessed that the Communist regime would evolve into a relatively open and indeed capitalistic society. In Afghanistan there are signs, still faint to be sure, that while the stern code remains intact, at least the Taliban leadership is beginning to modify its program. As I will point out, we can encourage this trend.

But as insurgents, the Taliban remain formidable foes. Our chances of defeating them are poor. Indeed, some independent observers believe they are becoming more popular while we are becoming less popular. They, and many non-Taliban Afghans, regard us, as they regarded the Russians, as foreign, anti-Muslim invaders. Moreover, they see that the government we are backing is corrupt and rapacious. Observers report that it is deeply involved in the drug trade, stealing aid money and even selling US-supplied arms to the Taliban (as the South Vietnamese government did to the Vietcong). Moreover, it is ineffective: its writ hardly runs outside Kabul. Most of the country is in the hands of brutal, predatory warlords. The Karzai government will not last long after our withdrawal—that was the fate of the Soviet puppet government there and of our puppet government in Saigon. Forced to choose between the warlords and the Taliban, Afghans are likely to choose the Taliban. As Gen. Stanley McChrystal has said, "Key groups have become nostalgic for the security and justice Taliban rule provided." Thus, we are courting long-term strategic defeat.

Many Afghans regard us as foreign, anti-Muslim invaders. And they see that the government we are backing is corrupt and rapacious.

Even in the tactical short run, I believe, trying to defeat the Taliban is not in America's interest. The harder we try, the more likely terrorism will be to increase and spread. As the history of every insurgency demonstrates, the more foreign boots there are on the ground and the harder the foreigners fight, the more hatred they engender. Substituting drone attacks for ground combat is no solution. Having been bombed from the air, I can attest that it is more infuriating than a ground attack.

Our principal objection to the Taliban is that it has given Osama bin Laden and his immediate entourage a base of operations. The two groups, however, are very different: the Taliban are a national political organization, anchored in Afghanistan's largest ethnic group, while Al Qaeda is a loose alliance of dissidents from many countries, united only by their belief that their legitimate aims of ethnic/national self-determination and religious culture are being denied.

For us, the overlap of the two groups comes when we try to get the Taliban to surrender Osama. We have offered what to poor tribesmen is an astronomical reward for him "dead or alive." This ploy has failed. In the Afghan code of Pashtunwali, to fail to protect someone who has been given sanctuary (*mel-*

William R. Polk's most recent book, Understanding Iran, *will be published by Palgrave Macmillan in October. He is working on a new book on Afghanistan, Pakistan and Kashmir, tentatively titled* The Cockpit of Asia.

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mastia) is a mortal sin, so our attempts to get the Pashtuns to do this insults their sense of honor.

So what, realistically, can we do, and what can we not do? Let me be specific.

On the nuclear issue, Pakistan and India are locked together. The only effective course of action is precisely the one you've recommended: reduction of nuclear weapons everywhere, beginning with us and the Russians. Once momentum is established, we should be able to move toward regional arms control with security guarantees, economic incentives and revocation of the neoconservative-inspired first-strike doctrine. From having served on the crisis management committee during the Cuban missile crisis, I can attest that nuclear weapons anywhere are a danger to people everywhere. Your policy is literally vital to us all.

Regarding Al Qaeda, what is important to US security is not capturing Osama bin Laden but disabling him. That is achievable. Here's how: he now enjoys the protection of the Pashtuns. *Melmastia* is a sacred obligation, but the Pashtunwali is limited. Osama's Pashtun hosts can insist, with honor, on his stopping actions that endanger them. That could be a key element in a truce that either we or, preferably, Pakistan makes with the Taliban. From that necessary first step, we can move toward dealing with the motivations of the disparate components of Al Qaeda. Since terrorist attacks can be mounted from many places, the only effective long-term defense against them is to deal with their causes.

On the drug trade, it would be convenient if the Afghans solved our drug problem for us, but if we are realistic we must admit that drugs are ultimately *our* problem. Heroin is proof that market forces really do work. We can make minor adjustments, subsidizing the planting of other crops, buying up what is grown, engaging in defoliation, etc., but as long as people are willing to pay a high price for drugs, producers and distributors will supply them. To put our attempt to stop them in perspective, imagine a foreign invader trying to stop the French from producing wine. We cannot expect any Afghan government to solve our problem, but if we leave, the Taliban would probably again combat the drug trade, as they did in the 1990s.

On our occupation, we need to consider three issues. Does our presence lead toward a sustainable result after our withdrawal? Can the occupation be maintained without turning a large part of the Afghan population and others against us? And can we afford it? I think the answer to all three is no. Consider these factors:

First, it is rare that insurgencies end with the establishment of a regime favored by the occupier—that was the experience of the British and Russians in Afghanistan, the Americans in Vietnam, the French in Algeria. Governments acceptable to the foreign occupier may last a short while, but almost always, those who fought hardest against the foreigner take over when he leaves.

Second, US military intervention in Afghanistan has not only solidified the Taliban as an organization but has also created increasing public support for it. There is much evidence in Afghanistan, as there has been in every insurgency I have studied, that foreign soldiers increase rather than calm hostility. The British found that to be true even in the American Revolution (where the two sides were "cousins," shared the same religion and spoke the same language).

Third, the cost in casualties may not rise to the level of Vietnam or even Iraq, but the financial cost is unlikely to be less. My hunch is that the real cost to the US economy will be $3 trillion to $6 trillion, calculating overall, not just Congressional appropriations. So the Afghan campaign could derail your plans for America, as Vietnam derailed Johnson's Great Society.

On Afghan government reform, there is not much we can do. Corruption runs from top to bottom. As I witnessed in Vietnam, if a government wishes to steal itself to death, foreigners can't stop it. We had an opportunity in the 1960s to help a reforming Afghan government but failed to do so; indeed, we welcomed the man who overthrew it, Mohammed Daoud Khan, because he was anti-Communist. To be realistic, we must assume that even an elected Hamid Karzai will probably not last long after our army departs.

On the Pakistani government, there is even less we can do. There also, massive corruption begins at the top. President Asif Ali Zardari, who is described as "our man," is said to be disliked by the vast majority of Pakistanis and has a long record of mind-boggling dishonesty. I think Zardari's administration will be replaced fairly soon by a military government. If so, we must roll with the punch but try, modestly and unobtrusively, to help encourage the growth of compensating civic institutions.

On Kashmir, as with many world problems, the logical solution is probably not practical. If India and Pakistan could agree to hold a plebiscite, the Kashmiris would probably accept modestly enhanced autonomy under India. Neither Pakistan nor India wants an independent Kashmir, but the current situation is costly for both, so they have established a back channel to inch toward accommodation. We should stay out of this problem.

On Islam, you have set the only intelligent, humane course for our diverse world. The legacy of the neoconservatives and the Bush administration can be overcome, but it will take time for the marvelous speech you gave in Cairo to convince Muslims that we are willing to live with them in a multicultural world.

On getting started, we have been given what I think is a major new opportunity by the Pakistanis. The Taliban are, after all, Pashtuns, Muslims and either Afghans or Pakistanis, while we are none of these. Thus Pakistan can fight the Taliban more acceptably than we can, and because of its long-standing support of their movement, Pakistan can more easily bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. If we are smart, we will take advantage of its attack on the Taliban in Swat by backing out as quickly and as gracefully as possible. How to get out is something former Senator George McGovern and I laid out in our book *Out of Iraq*, which with suitable changes can provide a template for Afghanistan. But as long as we are there, the war will continue, with disastrous consequences for all the things you want to do and we Americans need you to do. We must not follow Britain and Russia into Afghanistan's quicksand.

Respectfully yours,
William R. Polk

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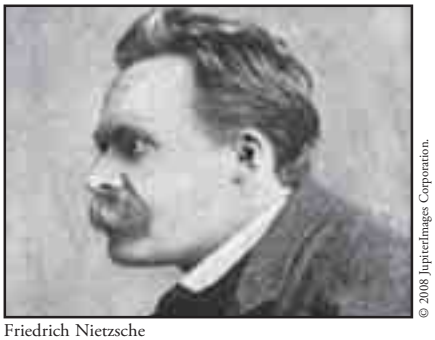

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The Coalfield Uprising

Appalachian activists are gaining ground in a campaign to ban mountaintop removal mining.

by JEFF BIGGERS

When the Environmental Protection Agency declared this year on September 11 that all pending mountaintop removal mining permits in four Appalachian states stood in violation of the Clean Water Act and required further review, Lora Webb didn't have time to join in any celebrations. As she and her husband, Steve, a coal miner, packed up their possessions and left his family's ancestral property outside Lindytown, West Virginia, Lora was more concerned about finding a place to sleep that night.

For the past few years, ever since a massive twenty-story dragline landed on a ridge near their home, the Webbs had endured twice-daily, bone-rattling explosions and the quasi-apocalyptic storms of coal dust and fly rock that blanketed their home and garden. Lindytown's creeks and mountain hollows no longer exist, and a once-thriving community has been reduced to a ghost town. "It's unreal. It's like we're living in a war zone," Lora Webb told a local newspaper last fall.

By the spring of this year, the Webbs were one of the last holdouts in the area. Hoping to avoid displacement, they pleaded with the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) and various federal agencies to enforce mining laws. Lora Webb even toted a jar of coal dust to Capitol Hill. In the end, though, they threw up their hands in bewilderment at the government's inaction and sold their beloved home to Massey Energy, the Richmond-based corporation that runs the nearby Twilight mountaintop removal site. Then they were issued a sixty-day order to evacuate.

The temporarily homeless Webbs are a stark example that mountaintop removal does more than "likely cause water quality impacts," as the EPA has determined. More than 3.5 million pounds of explosives rip daily across the ridges and historic mountain communities in West Virginia; a similar amount of explosives are employed in eastern Kentucky, southwestern Virginia and eastern Tennessee. Mountaintop removal operations have destroyed more than 500 mountains and 1.2 million acres of forest in our nation's oldest and most diverse range, and jammed more than 1,200 miles of streams with mining waste.

In cautious but no uncertain terms, the Obama administration has finally acknowledged these hazards, and has taken some important steps toward mitigating the damage. On June 11 the Council on Environmental Quality chief, Nancy Sutley, declared that the administration "has serious concerns about the impacts of mountaintop coal mining on our natural resources and on the health and welfare of the Appalachian communities."

Yet, while officials are framing the issue as a manageable environmental problem, mountaintop removal has also caused considerable human suffering and one of the largest displacements of US citizens since the nineteenth century, a fact the government has not adequately addressed. The Webbs are just one family among an untold number of Americans over the past four decades who have been forced by the coal industry to relocate. And the death of 22-year-old Joshua McCormick—who succumbed to kidney cancer on September 23 in the Prenter Hollow area in West Virginia, one of the most notorious coal slurry–contaminated and Clean Water Act–violated places in the nation—was a reminder to area residents of the growing death toll in the coalfields.

While the EPA's September announcement clearly signaled a return of science and law to the Appalachian coalfields after a Bush-era hiatus, the festering criminal implications of environmental and human rights violations from mountaintop removal remain a test for the well-meaning but Beltway-bound environmentalists in the Obama administration. Will they muster the political wherewithal to break King Coal's stranglehold on the region's fate?

Coalfield residents are not waiting for the Obama administration to come to their rescue. In fact, in the past year a surging activist and citizen lobbyist campaign has emerged as a fierce counterforce to the Big Coal lobby. The leaders of this growing and increasingly powerful movement are not content with a new era of stricter regulations in the coalfields. Their aim is to abolish mountaintop removal once and for all.

According to Stephanie Pistello, national field coordinator of Appalachian Voices and legislative associate for the Alliance for Appalachia (a coalition of thirteen citizens' groups from five states, including the Sierra Club's Central Appalachian Environmental Justice Program), more than 200 coalfield residents have traveled to Washington this year to tell Congress and the Obama administration about the true costs of mountaintop removal. In May a group of residents sent an urgent letter to the EPA and the Interior Department citing numerous examples of the WVDEP's lack of enforcement and negligence, and calling for federal action "to take primacy from a failed agency." Over the past year, residents have launched more than a dozen civil disobedience actions throughout the region: in August a group of coalfield activists chained themselves to the doors of the WVDEP office, and two tree-sitters halted a week of blasting at a Massey Energy mountaintop removal site in the Coal River Valley.

If anything, the EPA's surprising move in September only strengthened the activists' resolve. Three days after the announcement, the Alliance for Appalachia returned to Washington with a group of residents to meet with the EPA, the Council on Environmental Quality, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Interior Department and members of Congress.

"While we appreciate the EPA making this step to bring back

Jeff Biggers is the author of Reckoning at Eagle Creek: The Secret Legacy of Coal in the Heartland, *forthcoming from Nation Books.*

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enforcement of the Clean Water Act," says Lorelei Scarbro, an organizer with Coal River Mountain Watch and a coal miner's widow whose garden and hillside orchards border a proposed mountaintop removal site in West Virginia, "we will continue to come to Washington, DC, until mountaintop removal's irreversible devastation to our communities and waterways is halted."

No one understands the limits of regulation better than Bo Webb (unrelated to Lora and Steve Webb), a coal miner's son and Vietnam veteran who lives under a mountaintop removal operation in Naoma, West Virginia, on land that has been in his family since 1830. "Nearly four decades of mountaintop removal regulatory history have taught me one thing," he says. "The devastation from mountaintop removal can never be regulated but must be abolished."

AP PHOTO/JEFF GENTNER

A mountaintop removal coal-mining site at Kayford Mountain, West Virginia

In an open letter to President Obama written this past spring, Webb spelled out the looming situation: "My family and I, like many American citizens in Appalachia, are living in a state of terror. Like sitting ducks waiting to be buried in an avalanche of mountain waste, or crushed by a falling boulder, we are trapped in a war zone within our own country."

Webb's hollow has become a base for numerous organizations, including Coal River Mountain Watch, direct-action groups like Mountain Justice and Climate Ground Zero, and national environmental groups like Rainforest Action Network (RAN). "I've seen oil spills in the Amazon, walked in clear-cuts so large they can be seen from outer space and have toured some of the nastiest toxic waste dumps imaginable," says RAN executive director Michael Brune, whose national organization plays a full-time role in the coalfields movement. "But when it comes to complete and hopeless environmental devastation, nothing compares to a mountaintop removal site."

On June 23 Webb helped to organize a high-profile rally and nonviolent sit-in in the Coal River Valley of West Virginia, where 94-year-old former Congressman Ken Hechler, NASA climatologist James Hansen, actress Daryl Hannah, Brune and thirty-one coalfield residents were arrested at a coal prep plant. "Mountaintop removal is a crime against local people, nature, our children and our planet," Hansen declared.

A day later, Webb was informed that the blasting above his home, temporarily halted after federal regulators cited it for violations, would resume. "I received a call that the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, which determines the permits, gave the green light to renew the blasting closer to the coal seam, in an area that is even closer to our homes," he said.

This blatant circumvention of regulatory measures came as no surprise to Webb, who has seen the coal industry's influence penetrate not only the WVDEP but also the state judiciary. Earlier in June, the state Supreme Court upheld a decision to construct a second toxic coal silo near a school playground in Sundial, which sits down-slope of a 2.8 billion-gallon coal-slurry impoundment close to a mountaintop removal blasting site. A week before the decision, the US Supreme Court issued a 5-to-4 ruling that a Big Coal–financed justice on the West Virginia Supreme Court had engaged in an unconstitutional conflict-of-interest vote.

Thanks in large part to the work of coalfield activists, such state-level failures have earned notice at the federal level. On June 11 the Obama administration released an interagency plan for "unprecedented steps to reduce the environmental impacts of mountaintop coal mining."

"The steps we are taking today are a firm departure from the previous administration's approach to mountaintop coal mining, which failed to protect our communities, water and wildlife in Appalachia," said Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.

While carefully crafted rhetoric from government officials made for good headlines, it reminded coalfield residents and environmentalists of the regulatory compromise that granted federal approval for mountaintop removal in the first place. Webb worried that the Obama administration had been lured into a familiar trap.

On August 3, 1977, President Jimmy Carter signed the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act with an air of concern. Admitting it was "a disappointing effort" and a "watered-down" bill, Carter recognized that the historic legislation contained loopholes, allowing mountaintop removal while cracking down on other mining abuses.

For many coalfield activists, no one was more responsible for those loopholes than West Virginia Democratic Representative Nick Rahall. On the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the bill, Rahall proudly recounted taking the House Natural Resources Committee chair, Morris Udall, to the Appalachian coalfields, where Rahall pushed the Arizona Congressman to insert language permitting mountaintop removal operations.

Rahall, who is now serving his seventeenth term in Congress, remains a fierce proponent of the practice. He still touts putting golf courses and shopping centers on flattened ranges for "higher

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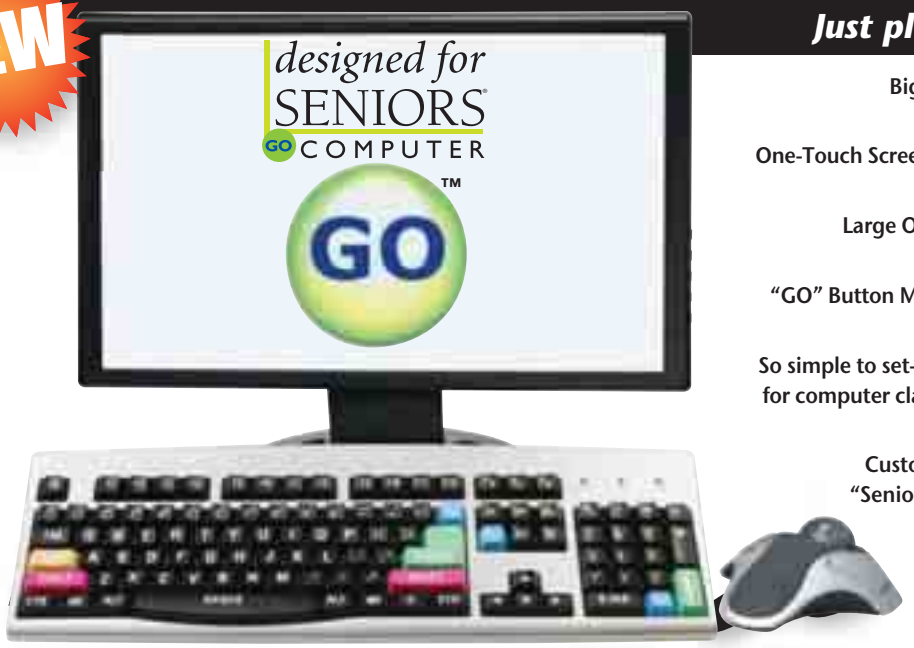

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uses," even though a 2002 EPA study pointed out that less than 3 percent of all mountaintop removal sites had been returned to any post-mining uses. In July he jumped out of a plane with the US Army Parachute Team at a "Friends of Coal" auto show in Beckley, West Virginia.

When the EPA announced its intention to bring greater scrutiny to mountaintop removal permits this past spring, Rahall made the rounds with top-level environmental officials and members of Obama's staff to fight against any reviews. The EPA clearly listened to his pitch. Reflecting on the sign-off on forty-two out of forty-eight surface-mining permits, many of which were for mountaintop removal, acting assistant administrator Michael Shapiro curiously fell back on misconstrued economic arguments. Even though mountaintop removal operations account for less than 8 percent of US coal consumption and rely mainly on nonunion and mechanized labor in areas of entrenched poverty, in May Shapiro told Rahall in a letter, "I understand the importance of coal mining in Appalachia for jobs, the economy and meeting the nation's energy needs."

Activists and experts agree that tighter regulations won't clean up mountaintop removal mining. Only a ban will stop the devastation.

A month later, as Ken Ward reported in the *Charleston Gazette*, a breakthrough study by West Virginia University researcher Michael Hendryx found that "coal mining costs Appalachians five times more in early deaths as the industry provides to the region in jobs." According to the study, "The coal industry generates a little more than $8 billion a year in economic benefits for the Appalachian region," but the researchers also estimated the cost of premature mining-related deaths across the Appalachian coalfields at a yearly average of $42 billion.

The Obama administration remained indecisive throughout the summer, publicly announcing its intentions to bolster regulatory oversight while quietly allowing the Army Corps of Engineers to continue issuing Clean Water Act permits for mountaintop removal. As Ward reported on August 11, the EPA privately approved eight valley fill waste piles proposed by CONSOL Energy. "Copies of key permit documents were not yet being made public, despite a promise from the Obama White House of increased transparency in the permit review process," Ward wrote.

A day later, when a federal court struck down an earlier move by the Interior Department to reverse a Bush-era manipulation of the 1983 "stream buffer" rule—a rule designed to restrict the dumping of mine waste into streams—the Obama administration could only manage a weak commitment to "improve mining practices" within the context of the court's ruling. In essence, a kinder, gentler mountaintop removal would blast on.

Appearing on Diane Rehm's National Public Radio talk-show on September 3, EPA administrator Lisa Jackson openly agreed with a caller, Ohio Citizen Action organizer Kate Russell. Russell cited University of Maryland scientist Dr. Margaret Palmer's Senate hearing testimony that "the impacts of mountaintop removal with valley fills are immense and irreversible, and there are no scientifically credible plans for mitigating these impacts."

"Let me first start by acknowledging that Kate's right," Jackson responded. "Much of the science shows that when you have a lot of, when you start to see a preponderance of stream miles filled in, you start to see higher conductivity levels, which is indicative of higher suspended solids, which starts to affect the aquatic ecosystems sort of from the bottom up."

An internal memo in June by WVDEP biologist Doug Wood provided even more startling conclusions: "We now have clear evidence that in some streams that drain mountaintop coal quarry valley fills, the entire order *Ephemeroptera* (mayflies) has been extirpated, not just certain genera of this order," Wood wrote. "The loss of an order of insects from a stream is taxonomically equivalent to the loss of all primates (including humans) from a given area. The loss of two insect orders is taxonomically equivalent to killing all primates and all rodents through toxic chemicals."

One thing was certain: the reckoning on mountaintop removal had come due for the Obama administration.

As the regulatory games stretch on, coalfield residents and their national allies have redoubled their efforts to hold the EPA and the Obama administration accountable for enforcing the Clean Water Act, and for bringing the thirty-eight-year terror of mountaintop removal mining to an end.

Activists like Chuck Nelson, a retired coal miner from Sylvester, West Virginia, and a volunteer with the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, are planning an action in October to call attention to the Webbs' devastated homeland. "In six months, one will never know Lindytown was ever there, that a community once served as home to many families," Nelson says. "We plan to hold a vigil for Lindytown. I guess you could call it a funeral, for all the families that used to love this land and considered it as home."

Invoking the image of the legendary Mary "Mother" Jones and her campaign as an octogenarian on behalf of West Virginia coal miners and their children in the 1920s, 81-year-old military veteran Roland Micklem recently announced a twenty-five-mile march and nonviolent sit-in, to be led by senior citizens on October 8 at a Massey Energy mountaintop removal site in Kanawha County.

Along with encouraging investment in the region for green jobs and renewable energy sources, the Alliance for Appalachia plans to mount an even more aggressive citizens' lobby campaign to pass the Clean Water Protection Act, which would in effect end mountaintop removal by halting the creation of valley fills and polluted waterways from mine waste.

"In order to counter the Goliath-like, multimillion-dollar coal industry lobby, the Alliance for Appalachia has organized monthly citizen lobby weeks," says Stephanie Pistello. "As a result, the Clean Water Protection Act has a record 157 bipartisan co-sponsors in the House, and for the first time in history, we have legislation before the Senate, the

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Appalachia Restoration Act, which has eight co-sponsors."

"The EPA has the authority to veto the permits," Jackson reminded NPR listeners in September. "The permits themselves are issued by the US Army Corps of Engineers. So EPA plays sort of an oversight role there." By the end of November, after receiving the Army Corps revisions of the permits, Jackson and the EPA should let the coalfield residents—and the nation—know how far that oversight extends.

"It looks like EPA is prepared to do everything it can, within the existing regulatory framework, to protect the mountains and people of Appalachia," says Teri Blanton of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, a citizens' organization in the state where more than half the designated permits are located. "This is great news, but it will take more than regulations to end the destruction. Mountaintop removal and valley fills should be banned."

Back in Washington, planning the next lobby week of coalfield residents and pinning their hopes on Congress to move forward on the Clean Water Protection Act, Pistello concludes: "The people of Appalachia are asking for mountaintop removal to be abolished, not regulated. We will continue to bring residents to DC as long as mountains are being bombed and water runs black." ■

Dick Gephardt's Spectacular Sellout

As a politician, he was a champion of progressive reform. Now he lobbies for its enemies.

by SEBASTIAN JONES

In March, months after the government gave an unprecedented $85 billion to AIG, the insurance giant released a list of counterparties, exposing some of the world's top financial institutions as the real recipients of the bailout. First among its peers, Goldman Sachs got a whopping $12.9 billion, despite having claimed in September to be insulated from AIG's troubles. Based on these revelations, Maryland Democratic Congressman Elijah Cummings, who had dogged the financial industry since the crisis began, told his staff to prepare a letter calling for an investigation.

CAITLIN DOVER

Two Congressional staffers familiar with the matter told *The Nation* that a draft was circulated to House members on March 23. Within hours, Cummings's office had received a phone call from a lobbying firm hired by Goldman Sachs, making an "insistent but polite" request for a meeting. Cummings, intending to send the letter regardless, granted the audience, and so it was that top Goldman executives like president Gary Cohen and CFO David Viniar arrived the next day. They brought someone else too, a big-name Democratic politician with serious populist credibility: Dick Gephardt.

While Gephardt spent most of his twenty-eight years in national Democratic politics quietly promoting and voting with establishment interests, he is best known for his friendship with labor and advocacy for universal healthcare during two presidential runs. In 2003 he harshly condemned corporate crime, which he said "ruined people's lives for selfishness and greed," and launched his candidacy claiming, "Every proposal I'm making, every idea I'm advancing has a single, central purpose: to revive a failing economy and give working Americans the help and security they need." So why, six years later, was he on Capitol Hill representing one of the biggest players in the largest economic crisis since the Great Depression? And further, why was he recently working for Visa to kill credit card reform, helping Peabody Energy stymie climate change legislation and consulting for UnitedHealth Group alongside Tom Daschle to block meaningful healthcare reform?

As autumn sets in, the progressive agenda on which Barack Obama rode to victory last November has stalled, even with Democrats controlling every branch of government. Key aspects of healthcare reform, like a public option, appear dead; climate change legislation, having narrowly passed the House in June, awaits an uncertain fate in the Senate; the Employee Free Choice Act and financial industry reforms have gone off the grid. Behind all these setbacks is a pattern: with little outright opposition, corporate interests have insinuated themselves into the legislative process to co-opt attempts at reform. As a result, the big-ticket items are rotting away, key provisions have been removed and bills are being weakened beyond recognition behind closed doors.

Certainly there are still those in Congress willing to stand up to pressure from lobbyists—like Cummings, who, after meeting with Gephardt and the Goldman Sachs executives, sent his letter anyway, launching an investigation by TARP inspector general Neil Barofsky. But the broader momentum is with the corporate interests, thanks to players like Gephardt who have escorted them to the bargaining table. In a town where everyone seemingly has a price, Gephardt has distinguished himself, selling his reputation as a pro-labor, pro–universal healthcare, pro-environment expert and advocate to his new corporate masters, giving their efforts to kill and maim reforms a familiar, friendly face in the Democratic establishment. As a result, Gephardt has become a highly

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sought-after and very effective lobbyist. He has also betrayed nearly every principle he once claimed to hold.

When Gephardt ran for president in 1988, his ads claimed he had "defeated the strongest lobbying effort in history," and even in his waning Congressional years, he hardly seemed a defender of lobbying. "I'm running for president because I've had enough of the oil barons, the status-quo apologists, the special-interest lobbyists running amok," he proclaimed in February 2003. By January, his run for the presidency was over; a year later, he gathered with friends in St. Louis for a retirement party. Many politicians and celebrities paid homage: via video, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter lavished praise on him, and sportscaster Bob Costas called him "the best president America never had." When a reporter asked Gephardt about his plans for the future, he said he was going to spend some time with his family and consider a couple of employment opportunities.

On January 1, 2005—before Gephardt's term had even expired—the Congressman's son-in-law signed papers to form a consultancy firm based in Delaware called Gephardt and Associates (now the Gephardt Group). But for most of 2005 it lay dormant as Gephardt joined corporate boards and advised a few big-name companies. Banned from lobbying Congress for a year, he soon discovered there were places outside Washington that needed influencing.

Gephardt has become a highly sought-after and effective lobbyist. He has also betrayed nearly every principle he once claimed to hold.

Like California: when Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger introduced legislation that would have opened the door to increased infrastructure privatization in January 2006, Democrats in the legislature balked. So Goldman Sachs, standing to benefit from these policies, sent Gephardt as an emissary to Sacramento, hoping to persuade the state to monetize infrastructure by levying tolls and then leasing roads to private investors for decades. "I've done some work with Goldman Sachs in their capacity as adviser to both the City of Chicago and now the State of Indiana," Gephardt told California lawmakers at a February 14, 2006, hearing, before extolling the virtues of infrastructure privatization if "negotiated properly."

Several years on, the results have been lackluster. In certain cases, poorly negotiated contracts with little oversight have allowed high tolls and, because of failure to estimate the true value of the infrastructure, have given the private sector windfall profits at the expense of local communities. Transit grids have been fragmented, causing unpredictable congestion, leading to significant litigation.

Gephardt has remained committed to the cause of infrastructure privatization, visiting Nevada's legislature in 2007, and at last year's Democratic National Convention joining bankers from Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase to advocate for the practice on a panel discussion. By then, however, Gephardt had a new day job. In June 2005 he joined DLA Piper, a large Washington lobbying firm, as a consultant. He would not lobby, he told the *Washington Post* at the time; he would just offer "strategic advice." His new boss had other ideas, however, telling the trade publication *Influence* a few days later, "Once he's able to, he'll lobby if that's something that might be useful." As it turned out, it would be indispensable, because on November 7, 2006, the Democrats recaptured Congress.

A few days later, DLA Piper welcomed "friends, clients, dignitaries," to a postelection briefing featuring Dick Armey and Dick Gephardt. Armey uttered an audible sigh as he began to speak, but Gephardt was upbeat, beginning his remarks with, "Let me get the smile off my face for a minute." He had reason to grin: the value of his services had just risen astronomically. Peabody Energy, for example, approached Gephardt in late 2006 about signing on to lobby for the company. As Frederick Palmer, Peabody's top in-house lobbyist, told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* a year later, "I can meet with a lot of people, but I'm Fred Palmer. He's Dick Gephardt."

Initially, the Gephardt Group claimed to have standards about the types of clients it would represent. In April 2007, soon after the firm's first set of lobbying filings became public, Matthew Gephardt, a founding partner in his father's business, laid out the firm's philosophy: "We're really getting involved with companies that share our values—ones involved in good corporate citizenry, with taking care of their employees, taking care of the environment and their local area as well, investing back in the community."

By these standards, Peabody Energy, the world's largest private coal company and the firm's first registered client, was a bizarre choice. Palmer, a senior vice president with the company, had helped to run the Greening Earth Society, a defunct industry front-group specializing in climate change denial, famously adopting as its motto "CO_2 is beneficial to humankind and all of nature." Describing their environmental record as "horrendous," Bruce Nilles, director of the Sierra Club's National Coal Campaign, told me in a recent interview that Peabody's "goal is to burn as much coal as possible."

In an apparent attempt to counter this reputation, Peabody and Gephardt signed on to pushes for "clean coal"—something many environmentalists consider an oxymoron at best. In July Gephardt served as keynote speaker for the Clean Coal Technology Conference in Hope, Arkansas. All the big industry players were there, but several environmental groups, like the Sierra Club, were denied invitations. One speaker complained about excessive environmental regulation, while Mike Ross, the Blue Dog representative now famous for giving the White House daily headaches on healthcare, dropped by to reassure with platitudes like "coal is part of the solution to America's energy problems."

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Then there is Peabody's labor record. According to a July 2006 report prepared by Religious Leaders for Coalfield Justice and Interfaith Worker Justice, the company worked hard to strip its mines of unionized workers, with CEO Greg Boyce saying in 2005, "We have reduced the intensity of our unionization, and we would continue on that path." The Rev. Theodore Erickson, a veteran of several coal-country labor disputes, told me that Peabody has been "aggressively decimating its unions" since the 1990s by closing unionized mines and opening new facilities nearby as a minority stakeholder. "Once the mine is fully staffed with nonunion people," Erickson explained, "Peabody will buy the remainder…and the mine is forever nonunion." The Sierra Club has joined union organizers at several recent St. Louis shareholder meetings in joint protests over Peabody's environmental and labor policies. "They're vehemently antiunion," says Nilles.

In March, when *Harper's* reporter Ken Silverstein noted that Gephardt had signed up the US Chamber of Commerce as a client, a spokeswoman for the Gephardt Group claimed their work was "not by any means anti-labor" because they were not registered to lobby the issue for any of their customers. It's an academic distinction that Gephardt's firm recently repeated as its sole comment in response to a series of detailed questions from *The Nation*. However, the firm did note one new exception. In July, the National Association of Professional Employer Organizations (NAPEO) retained Gephardt's services to lobby labor, healthcare and tax issues, according to disclosure filings. Professional employer organizations (PEOs) are a $68 billion industry that provides outsourced human resource departments to their clients, which take care of health benefits, workers' compensation and payroll administration. For some small businesses, they provide a cheap and convenient service; but mostly, sources involved with the labor movement told me, PEOs are a buffer between employee and employer, with the PEOs assuming the legal role of employer for entire segments of a company's workforce. After decades spent working to deregulate state labor laws, PEOs are making a renewed attempt to do the same at the federal level, with Gephardt as front man. Flying mostly under the radar—unions have been slow to recognize the threat they represent—PEOs are in a perfect position to make an entry into the legislative process. Under the Bush administration, PEOs had an ally in the White House, and an NLRB ruling was overturned that had allowed employees working in the same office for different employers to organize as a single bargaining unit. According to David West, director of the Center for a Changing Workforce, it will take some time for the matter to come before the Obama administration's NLRB, and PEOs and similar industries are seeking to push their advantage in Congress. "It used to be that they had Republican lobbyists working on this stuff for them, but I think they've realized, particularly in this administration, that they've got to go a whole different way," says West.

When I mentioned Gephardt's new contract with NAPEO during an interview, one prominent labor lawyer paused before saying, "Oh, God. That's kind of creepy." A spokesperson for NAPEO declined to discuss concerns raised by labor about PEOs, but NAPEO's executive vice president, Milan Yager, told *The Nation* in a subsequent interview that his industry shares goals with the labor movement, such as workplace safety, benefits and compliance with employment law. With regard to Gephardt, Yager offered a glowing review. "He is a man of incredible credibility and ethics and is well regarded in this city," he said, adding that NAPEO was "looking for someone to open doors and help us establish a dialogue [with labor], and there's no better person than Dick Gephardt."

The area where Gephardt has provided his new paymasters the broadest range of services has been healthcare. Lobbying is a patchwork of tasks, as James Thurber, a professor at American University, explained in a recent interview. Most of them require no registration, like marketing; running associations and nonprofits; doing grassroots, toproots and astroturfing; serving as media experts; and joining think tanks. "The $3.1 billion that's recorded spent by federal registered lobbyists is just the tip of the iceberg," Thurber said, before estimating that as many as 90,000 people are involved in Washington's advocacy business.

The area where Gephardt has provided his new paymasters with the broadest range of services has been healthcare.

While many firms will contract and subcontract to cover these responsibilities, Gephardt's has served as a one-stop shop, providing all these services to clients in the pharmaceutical and health insurance industries.

With Tom Daschle, Gephardt has advised UnitedHealth Group, one of America's largest private insurers, which has waged a strong campaign against a public option. Since 2007 Gephardt has served on the advisory board of Extend Health, another insurance company, graduating to the board of directors earlier this year. However, his biggest involvement has been with the pharmaceutical industry.

In addition to a large lobbying contract with the Medicines Company, Gephardt serves as chair of the Council for American Medical Innovation (CAMI), formed by and affiliated with PhRMA. It debuted in March, and in this capacity he has hired his own firm to lobby for the organization, to push "the innovation agenda," according to lobbying reports. The phrase is lobby-speak for attempts by the pharmaceutical industry to extend patents and block cheaper generic drugs from the market. On CAMI's behalf, Gephardt has jetted around the country, participating in forums and giving speeches. Before CAMI's founding, he was doing similar work directly for PhRMA, like attending last December's "Best and Brightest" forum in Philadelphia, where he and two prominent Pennsylvania politicians called for a federal "bailout for the pharmaceutical industry." On its website, Gephardt Group's Government Affairs division describes its work for CAMI as a "success story," claiming "our firm identified and recruited members to form a council…developing public forums and providing Mr. Gephardt's

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participation as a spokesperson and expert."

In the role of expert, Gephardt told the *New York Times* in April—before the healthcare battle had even commenced—that universal healthcare legislation was dead for the year and that Democrats should instead try for incremental reform. The article appeared just days after its author had moderated a panel discussion on healthcare reform that Gephardt and executives from several of his lobbying clients participated in.

When I first contacted his firm to set up an interview in late July, I was told that Gephardt's schedule was "unfortunately pretty booked up in the mad rush before recess." With all the lobbying he's been up to, this was hardly a surprise. In fact, the past few years have been one long, mad rush, really: since registering its first client in March 2007, Gephardt Group has consistently padded its cash haul quarter to quarter, pulling in $2.4 million from January to June this year alone—50 percent more than it made during all of 2008. More, these figures represent a fraction of the firm's earnings, since only its twenty-seven federally registered clients are disclosed in lobbying reports, leaving unreported the cash made from advocacy and advisory services provided to other customers.

Taken as a whole, Gephardt's success represents two distinct problems. For Democrats, it raises the legitimate question of whether his ideological shift from progressive populist to big business champion is indicative of where the entire party is headed after two successive electoral victories. For Washington, it exposes the rot at the core and the insidious manner in which Gephardt has harnessed his media-anointed, colleague-respected role as an expert on issues of labor and universal healthcare to work against reforms for both.

While it is well within Gephardt's rights to make money representing every anti-labor, anti-environmental, anti–universal healthcare client he can find, the former Congressman cannot have it both ways. Neither can the Democratic Party. In 2006 the top issue for voters was Washington's "culture of corruption," epitomized by Tom DeLay's K Street Project and Jack Abramoff's illegal excesses. Then, as in the 2008 campaign, Democrats were happy to decry the influence of lobbyists and special interests at every turn. As an electoral strategy, it worked brilliantly, but there has been little real reform to match the rhetoric. So it is hardly surprising that men like Gephardt continue to be welcome in polite progressive company, to be treated as statesmen by the media and their Congressional colleagues, and to serve as ostensibly neutral experts on issues they are heavily invested in on behalf of their new employers. Progressives would be fooling themselves to think the Gephardts of the Beltway are any different from their Republican predecessors. In fact, when it comes to cynically exploiting his reputation to profit his new employers, Gephardt is worse. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

concern to many African farmers' movements. This demonstrates our broader point. Despite its best efforts to be accountable, the Gates Foundation's interventions reflect the undemocratic vision of a single very powerful and unaccountable organization.

RAJ PATEL, ERIC HOLT-GIMENEZ
ANNIE SHATTUCK, *Food First*

Hunger Hurts, at Home and Abroad

AUSTIN, TEX.

As an anti-hunger activist, I was disappointed to find not a single reference to domestic hunger in your "Food for All" issue. According to the USDA, 36.2 million Americans live in households facing hunger. Most of these families are not particularly interested in the nutritional value of CSAs, school gardens or "food justice." They are interested in putting something—anything—on the table tonight so their children go to bed with food in their bellies. They worry about making it through the weekend without the help of school meals, or through the month with the food stamps they have left.

J.C. DWYER

House Food Bill Is Rotten

ATHENS, N.Y.

I was disappointed to read John Nichols's "Food Without Fear" with an endorsement of the House food safety bill. One of the biggest impediments to local, sustainable food production is the regulatory structure. We have two food systems. One depletes topsoil, pollutes waterways, tortures animals, eats up fossil fuel, then processes everything in huge facilities that smear pathogens and toxins around and turn out the denatured food that lines supermarket aisles. The other system builds topsoil, maintains balanced ecosystems, treats animals humanely, supports rural communities and produces healthy food.

The trouble with the bill is that it takes the industrial system as a universal given, doing nothing to address unsustainable practices, and applies its regulations to both the industrial and the small, local producer, making it so expensive and onerous to comply with that it will either drive the small producer out of business or force her to become part of the industrial system. The bill will keep sustainable food output low and prices high.

LYNN KRAMER

Regrets: Hijacked History

On page 27 of "Food for All," our illustrator took a historic photograph out of context to make a food-related collage. The woman in the photo is Barbara Gittings, a pioneer in the lesbian and gay rights movement. In 1958 Gittings founded the New York chapter of the first US lesbian organization, the Daughters of Bilitis. She also helped organize gay rights demos in the years before Stonewall, challenged the American Psychiatric Association's antigay views and headed the American Library Association's Gay Task Force. The photo, of a 1966 demonstration in Philadelphia, was taken by Kay Tobin Lahusen, Gittings's lifetime partner and a key player in the movement as the first openly gay photojournalist. Lahusen helped found the Gay Activists Alliance and has had her work featured in several exhibits, including "Standing Tall Before Stonewall" in 2000 in Philadelphia, which she curated.

In last week's "Goldstone Reports" ["Noted"], the second sentence of the second paragraph should have said, "The mainstream media *here* [not *in Israel*] have downplayed the report's significance."

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Books & the Arts.

The First Counterrevolutionary

by COREY ROBIN

DOUG CHAYKA

Revolution sent Thomas Hobbes into exile; reaction sent him back. In 1640 parliamentary opponents of Charles I such as John Pym were denouncing anyone "preaching for absolute monarchy that the king may do what he list." Hobbes had recently finished writing *The Elements of Law*, which did just that. After the king's top adviser and a theologian of unlimited royal power were both arrested, Hobbes decided it was time to go. Not waiting for his bags to be packed, he fled England for France.

Eleven years and a civil war later, Hobbes fled France for England. This time, he was running from the royalists. As before, Hobbes had just finished a book. *Leviathan*, he would later explain, "fights on behalf of all kings and all those who under whatever name bear the rights of kings." It was this seeming indifference about the identity of the sovereign that was now getting him into trouble. *Leviathan* justified, no, demanded, that men submit to any person or persons capable of protecting them from foreign attack and civil unrest. With the monarchy abolished and Oliver Cromwell's forces in control of England and providing for the people's safety, *Leviathan* seemed to recommend that everyone, including the defeated royalists, profess their allegiance to the Commonwealth. Versions of that argument had already gotten Anthony Ascham, ambassador for the Commonwealth, assassinated by royalist exiles in Spain. So when Hobbes learned that clergymen in France were trying to arrest him—*Leviathan* was also vehemently anti-Catholic, which offended the Queen Mother—he slipped out of Paris and made his way back to London.

It's no accident that Hobbes fled his enemies and then his friends, for he was fashioning a political theory that shredded longstanding alliances. Rather than reject the revolutionary argument, he absorbed and transformed it. From its deepest categories and idioms he derived an uncompromising defense of the most hidebound form of rule. He sensed the centrifugal pulses of early modern Europe—the priesthood of all believers, the democratic armies massing under the banner of ancient republican ideals, science and skepticism—and sought to convert them into a single centripetal force: a sovereign so terrible and benign as to make any challenge to such authority seem not only immoral but also irrational. Not unlike the Italian Futurists, Hobbes put dissolution in the service of resolution. He was the first and, along with Nietzsche, the greatest philosopher of counterrevolution, a blender *avant la lettre* of cultural modernism and political reaction who understood that to defeat a revolution you first must become the revolution.

And how has he been treated by the party

Hobbes and Republican Liberty
By Quentin Skinner.
Cambridge. 245 pp. Paper $22.99.

Corey Robin teaches political science at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He is the author of Fear: The History of a Political Idea *and is writing a book about conservatism and counterrevolution.*

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of order? Not well. In an essay about Bishop Bramhall, a royalist who locked horns with Hobbes, T.S. Eliot (an adroit blender himself) called Hobbes "one of those extraordinary little upstarts whom the chaotic motions of the Renaissance tossed into an eminence which they hardly deserved." Of the four twentieth-century political theorists identified by Perry Anderson as "The Intransigent Right"—Leo Strauss, Carl Schmitt, Michael Oakeshott and Friedrich von Hayek—only Oakeshott saw in Hobbes the faintest glimmer of a kindred spirit. The rest viewed him as the source of a malignant liberalism, Jacobinism or even Bolshevism.

Custodians of the old regime often mistake the counterrevolutionary for the opposition because they can't detect the alchemy of his argument. All they sense is what's there—a newfangled way of thinking that sounds dangerously like the revolutionary's—and what's missing: the traditional justification for authority. That makes the counterrevolutionary a suspect in their eyes, not a comrade. They're not entirely wrong in this. Neither left nor, strictly speaking, right—one of Hayek's most famous pieces of writing is called "Why I Am Not a Conservative"—the counterrevolutionary is a pastiche of incongruities: high and low, old and new, left and right, irony and faith. That pastiche is essential, for what a counterrevolutionary is trying to do is nothing less than square the circle—make prerogative popular and remake a regime that claims never to have been made in the first place (the old regime was, is and will be; it is not made). These are tasks no other political movement has to undertake. It's not that the counterrevolutionary is personally disposed to paradox; it's just that he's forced to straddle historical contradictions, for power's sake.

But why even bring Hobbes before the bar of conservatism, the right and counterrevolution? After all, none of these terms appear to have come into circulation until the French Revolution or later, and most historians no longer believe that the English Civil War was a revolution. The forces that overthrew the monarchy may have been looking for the Roman Republic or the ancient constitution. They may have wanted a reformation of religious manners or limitations on royal power. But a revolution lay nowhere in their sights. How could Hobbes have been a counterrevolutionary if there was no revolution for him to oppose?

Hobbes, for one, thought otherwise. In *Behemoth*, his most considered treatment of the issue, he firmly declared the English Civil War a revolution. And though he meant by that term something like what the ancients meant—a cyclical process of regime change, more akin to the orbit of the planets than a great leap forward—Hobbes saw in the overthrow of the monarchy a zealous (and, to his mind, toxic) yearning for democracy, a firm desire to redistribute power to a greater number of men than previously had enjoyed it. That, for Hobbes, was the essence of the revolutionary challenge, and so it has remained ever since—whether in Russia in 1917, Flint in 1937 or Selma in 1965. That it was inspired by visions of the past rather than the future need not detain us any more than it did Hobbes—or Benjamin Constant or Karl Marx, for that matter, both of whom saw how easy it was for the French to make their revolution while (or even by) looking backward.

> Hobbes was at odds with the revolution and the very regime he claimed as his cause.

Hobbes clearly opposed the "democraticals," as he called the parliamentary forces and their followers. Quentin Skinner's contention in *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* is that Hobbes expended a considerable sum of his philosophical energy in this opposition and that his greatest innovations derived from it. His specific target was the republicans' conception of liberty, their notion that individual freedom entailed men collectively governing themselves. By unfastening the links between personal freedom and the nature of political power, Hobbes was able to argue that men could be free in an absolute monarchy—or at least no less free than they were in a republic or a democracy. It was "an epoch-making moment in the history of Anglophone political thought," says Skinner, resulting in a novel account of liberty to which we remain indebted—unhappily, in Skinner's view—to this day.

Skinner is much too fastidious a historian to call Hobbes a counterrevolutionary, but his splendid little book opens a very large window onto the complexities of that enterprise. Every counterrevolutionary faces the same question: how to defend an old regime that has been or is being destroyed? The first impulse—to reiterate the regime's ancient truths—is usually the worst, for it is often those truths that got the regime into trouble in the first place. Either the world has so changed that they no longer command assent or they have grown so pliable that they mutate into arguments for revolution. Either way, the counterrevolutionary must look elsewhere for materials from which to fashion his defense of the old regime. That can put him at odds, as Hobbes came to realize, not only with the revolution but also with the very regime he claims as his cause.

The monarchy's defenders in the first half of the seventeenth century offered two types of arguments, neither of which Hobbes could endorse. The first, which Skinner does not discuss, was the divine right of kings. Itself a recent innovation—James I, Charles's father, was its major exponent in Britain—it held that the king was God's agent on earth (indeed, he was rather like God on earth); that he was accountable only to God; that he alone was authorized to govern and should not be restrained by the law, institutions or the people. As Charles's adviser allegedly put it, "the king's little finger should be thicker than the loins of the law."

While such absolutism appealed to Hobbes, the foundation of the theory was shaky. Most divine right theorists presumed what Hobbes and his contemporaries, particularly on the continent, believed no longer existed: a teleology of human ends that mirrored the natural hierarchy of the universe and produced unassailable definitions of good and evil, just and unjust. After a century of bloodshed over the meaning of those terms and skepticism about the existence of a natural order or our ability to know it, defenses of divine right seemed neither credible nor reliable. With their dubious premises, they were just as likely to spark conflict as to settle it.

Arguably more troubling was that the theory depicted a political theater in which there were only two actors of any consequence: God and king, each performing for the other. Though Hobbes believed that the sovereign should never share the stage with anyone, he was too attuned to the democratic distemper of his times not to notice that the theory had sent a third actor—the people—packing. That was all well and good when the people were quiet and deferential, but during the 1640s it wasn't viable. The people were onstage, demanding a leading role; they could not be ignored or given a bit part.

Changes in England, in short, had ren-

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dered divine right untenable. The challenge Hobbes faced was intricate: how to preserve the thrust of the theory (unquestioning submission to absolute, undivided power) while ditching its anachronistic premises. Hobbes's theory of consent, in which individuals contract with one another to create a sovereign with absolute power over them, and his theory of representation, in which the people are impersonated by the sovereign without his being obliged to them, did the trick.

The theory of consent made no assumptions about the definition of good and evil or a natural hierarchy to the universe. To the contrary, it presumed that men disagreed about such things, and so violently, that the only way they could pursue their conflicting goals and survive was to cede all of their power to the state and submit to it without protest or challenge. Protecting them from one another, the state guaranteed them the space and security to get on with their lives. Along with Hobbes's account of representation, the theory of consent had an added advantage: though it gave all power to the sovereign, the people could still imagine themselves in his body, in every swing of his sword. They created him; he represented them; to all intents and purposes, they were him. Except that they weren't: they may have been the authors of Leviathan—Hobbes's infamous name for the sovereign, derived from the Book of Job—but like any author, they had no control over their creation. It was an inspired move, characteristic of all great counterrevolutionary theories, in which the people become actors without roles, an audience that believes it is onstage.

Hobbes sought to separate the status of our personal liberty from the state of public affairs.

The second argument offered in favor of the monarchy, the constitutional royalist position, had deeper roots in English thought and was therefore more difficult to counter. It held that England was a free society because royal power was limited by the common law or shared with Parliament. That combination of the rule of law and shared sovereignty, claimed Sir Walter Raleigh, was what distinguished the free subjects of the king from the benighted slaves of despots in the East. It was this argument and its radical offshoots, Skinner maintains, that quickened Hobbes's most profound and daring reflections about liberty.

Beneath this conception of political liberty lay a distinction between acting for the sake of reason and acting at the behest of passion. The first is a free act; the second is not. "To act out of passion," Skinner explains, "is not to act as a free man, or even distinctively as a man at all; such actions are not an expression of true liberty but of mere licence or animal brutishness." Freedom entails acting upon what we have willed, but will should not be confused with appetite or aversion. As Bramhall put it: "A free act is only that which proceeds from the free election of the rational will." "Where there is no consideration nor use of reason, there is no liberty at all." Being free entails our acting in accordance with reason or, in political terms, living under laws as opposed to arbitrary power.

Like the divine right of kings, the constitutional argument had been rendered anachronistic by recent developments, most notably the fact that no English monarch in the first half of the seventeenth century still believed it. Intent on turning England into a modern state, James and Charles were compelled to advance far more absolutist claims about the nature of their power than the constitutional argument allowed.

More troubling for the regime, however, was how easily the constitutional argument could be turned into a republican one and used against the king. Which it was, in the muted pleas of common lawyers and parliamentary supplicants, who argued that by flouting the common law and Parliament, Charles was threatening to turn England into a tyranny; and in the utopian demands of radicals, who insisted that anything short of a republic or democracy, where men lived under laws they had consented to, constituted a tyranny. All monarchy, in their eyes, was despotism.

Hobbes thought that the latter argument derived from the "Histories, and Philosophy of the Antient Greeks, and Romans," which were so influential among educated opponents of the king. Skinner agrees, and a considerable portion of this book (as well as several of his other books and essays) is devoted to tracing the classical lineage of what he calls the "neo-Roman" or republican argument. That ancient heritage was given new life by Machiavelli's *Discorsi*, translated into English in 1636, which Skinner suggests may have been Hobbes's ultimate target in his admonition against popular government.

But Skinner also points out that the underlying premise of the republican argument—what distinguishes a free man from a slave is that the former is subject to his own will while the latter is subject to the will of another—could be found, in a "word-for-word" reproduction of "the *Digest* of Roman law," in English common law as early as the thirteenth century. Likewise, the distinction between will and appetite, liberty and license, was "deeply embedded" in both the scholastic traditions of the Middle Ages and the humanist culture of the Renaissance. It thus found expression not only in the royalist positions of Bramhall and his ilk but also among the radicals and regicides who overthrew the king. A fascinating subtext of Skinner's argument, then, is that beneath the chasm separating royalist and republican lay a deep and volatile bedrock of shared assumption about the nature of liberty. It was Hobbes's genius to recognize that assumption and his ambition to crush it.

While the notion that freedom entails living under laws lent support to the constitutional royalists, who made much of the distinction between lawful monarchs and despotic tyrants, it did not necessarily lead to the conclusion that a free regime had to be a republic or a democracy. To advance that argument, the radicals had to make two additional claims: first, to equate arbitrariness or lawlessness with a will that is not one's own, a will that is external or alien; and second, to equate the decisions of a popular government with a will that is one's own. To be subject to a will that is mine—the laws of a republic or democracy—is to be free; to be subject to a will that is not mine—the edicts of a king or foreign country—is to be a slave.

It's not always clear from Skinner's text how the republicans made these claims; his *Liberty Before Liberalism*, published in 1998, provides a better map of their maneuvers. But what *is* clear is that they were aided in these efforts by a peculiar, though popular, understanding of slavery. What made someone a slave, in the eyes of many, was not that he was in chains or that his owner impeded or compelled his movements. It was that he lived and moved under a net—the ever changing, arbitrary will of his master—that might fall upon him at any moment. Even if it never fell—the master never told him what to do or never punished him for not doing it, or he never desired to do something different from what the master told him—the slave was still enslaved. The fact that he "lived in total dependence" on the will of

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another—that he was under the master's jurisdiction—"was sufficient in itself to guarantee the servility" that the master "expected and despised."

> The mere presence of relations of domination and dependence…is held to reduce us from the status of… "free-men" to that of slaves. It is not sufficient, in other words, to enjoy our civic rights and liberties as a matter of fact; if we are to count as free-men, it is necessary to enjoy them in a particular way. We must never hold them merely by the grace or goodwill of anyone else; we must always hold them independently of anyone's arbitrary power to take them away from us.

At the individual level, freedom means being one's own master; politically, it requires a republic or democracy. Only a full sharing in and of the public power will ensure that we enjoy our freedom in the "particular way" freedom requires. It is this movement from the personal to the political—the notion that individual freedom entails political membership and participation, that it is fatally abridged by our not being full citizens of the polity—that is arguably the most radical element of the theory of popular government and, from Hobbes's view, the most dangerous.

Hobbes sets about destroying the argument from the ground up. Breaking with traditional understandings, he argues for a materialist account of the will. The will, he says, is not a decision resulting from our reasoned deliberation about our desires and aversions; it is simply the last appetite or aversion we feel before we act, and that prompts the act. Deliberation is like the oscillating rod of a metronome—back and forth our inclinations go, alternating between appetite and aversion—but less steady. Wherever the rod comes to rest—and produces an action or, conversely, no action at all—is our will. If that seems arbitrary and mechanistic, it should: the will does not stand above our appetites and aversions, judging and choosing among them; it *is* our appetites and aversions. There is no such thing as a free or autonomous will; there is only "the last Appetite, or Aversion, immediately adhaering to the action, or to the omission thereof."

Imagine a man with the keenest appetite for wine, racing into a building on fire in order to rescue a case of it; now imagine a man with the fiercest aversion to dogs, racing into that same building to escape a pack of them. Hobbes's opponents would see in these examples only the force of irrational compulsion; Hobbes sees the will in action. These may not be the wisest or sanest acts, Hobbes acknowledges, but wisdom and sanity need not play any part in volition. They may be compelled, but so are the actions of a man on a listing vessel who throws his bags overboard in order to lighten the load and save himself. Hard choices, actions taken under duress—these are as much expressions of my will as the decisions I make in the calm of my study. Extending the analogy, Hobbes would argue that the surrender of my wallet to someone holding a gun to my head is also a willed act: I have chosen my life over my wallet.

Against his opponents, Hobbes suggests that there can be no such thing as voluntarily acting against my will; all voluntary action is an expression of the will. External constraints like being locked in a room can prevent me from acting upon my will; being on a chain gang can force me to act in ways I have not willed. But I cannot act voluntarily against my will. In the case of the mugger, Hobbes would say that his gun changed my will: I went from wanting to safeguard the money in my wallet to wanting to protect my life.

If I can't act voluntarily against my will, I can't act voluntarily in accordance with a will that is not my own. If I obey a king because I fear that he will kill or imprison me, that does not signify the absence, forfeiture, betrayal or subjection of my will; it is my will. I could have willed otherwise—hundreds of thousands during Hobbes's lifetime did—but my survival or liberty was more important to me than whatever it was that may have called for my disobedience.

Hobbes's definition of freedom follows from his understanding of the will. Liberty, he says, is "the absence of…externall Impediments of motion," and a free man "*is he, that in those things, which by his strength and wit he is able to do, is not hindred to doe what he has a will to.*" I can be rendered un-free, Hobbes insists, only by external obstacles to my movement. Chains and walls are such obstacles; laws and obligations are another, albeit a more metaphorical, sort (Skinner's discussion of the latter is especially lucid, illuminating an argument that has long vexed scholars). If the obstacle lies within me—I don't have the ability to do something; I am too afraid to do it—I lack power or will, not freedom. That lack says more about what Hobbes, in a letter cited by Skinner, calls "*the nature and intrinsical quality of the agent*" rather than the conditions of his political environment.

And that, in Skinner's suspenseful retelling of how Hobbes came to this understanding of freedom, is the purpose of Hobbes's effort: to separate the status of our personal liberty from the state of public affairs. Freedom is dependent on the presence of government but not on the form that government takes; whether we live under a king, a republic or a democracy does not change the quantity or quality of the freedom we enjoy. This separation had the dramatic effect of making freedom seem both less present and more present under a king than Hobbes's republican and royalist antagonists had allowed.

On the one hand, Hobbes insists that there is no way to be free and subject at the same time. Submission to government entails an absolute loss of liberty: wherever I am bound by law, I am not free to move. When republicans argue that citizens are free because they make the laws, Hobbes claims, they are confusing sovereignty with liberty: what the citizen has is political power, not freedom. He is just as obliged (perhaps more obliged, Rousseau will later suggest) to submit to the law, is just as un-free, as he would be under a monarchy. And when the constitutional royalists argue that the king's subjects are free because the king's power is limited by the law, Hobbes claims that they are just confused.

On the other hand, as Skinner shows in a set of elegant passages, Hobbes thought that if freedom is unimpeded motion, it stands to reason that we are a lot freer under a monarch, even an absolute monarch, than the royalist and the republican realize (or care to admit). First and most simply, even when we act out of fear, we are acting freely. "Feare, and Liberty are consistent," says Hobbes, because fear expresses our negative inclinations; they may be negative, but that doesn't negate the fact that they are *our* inclinations. So long as we are not impeded from acting upon them, we are free. Even when we are most terrified of the king's punishments, we are free: "all actions which men doe in Common-wealths, for *feare* of the law, are actions, which the doers had *liberty* to omit."

More important, wherever the law is silent, neither commanding nor prohibiting, we are free. One need only contemplate all the "ways a man may move himself," Hobbes says in *De Cive*, to see all the ways he can be free in a monarchy. These freedoms, he ex-

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plains in *Leviathan*, include "the Liberty to buy, and sell, and otherwise contract with one another; to choose their own aboad, their own diet, their own trade of life, and institute their children as they themselves think fit; & the like." To whatever degree the sovereign can guarantee that freedom of movement, to go about our business without the hindrance of other men, we are free. Submission to his power, in other words, augments our freedom. The more absolute our submission, the more powerful he is and the freer we are. Subjugation is emancipation.

Skinner is generally wary of viewing the past as a mirror of or prelude to the present. He prefers to emphasize its refractory quality: the past is not prologue; it is another country. We can learn something about ourselves by traveling there, but only if we resist the temptation to assimilate its otherness.

Yet it's also clear from *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* and Skinner's other writings that he believes the Hobbesian view of liberty has persisted in the writings of Constant, Isaiah Berlin and the tradition of what is now called negative or minimal liberalism. Unlike the robust liberalism of John Dewey, which suggests that anything less than complete democracy in the public and private spheres poses a threat to individual freedom, negative liberalism focuses on a narrower range of abridgments: being "prevented by other persons from doing what I want," as Berlin puts it, when there is "deliberate interference of other human beings within the area in which I wish to act." Freedom, to Berlin, is the absence of interference, and, in a nod to Hobbes, he writes that it "is not incompatible with some kinds of autocracy, or at any rate with the absence of self-government."

Skinner also has suggested that the republican account of liberty has lived on in the democratic movements of the nineteenth century, the Marxist critique of wage slavery, feminism and "other pleas on behalf of the dependent and oppressed." Where the negative liberal believes that the state should ensure "that its citizens do not suffer any unjust or unnecessary interference in the pursuit of their chosen goals"—most notably at the hands of the state—the radical, writes Skinner, "maintains that this can never be sufficient." The state must also "liberate its citizens from…personal exploitation and dependence."

If Berlin and Constant are the heirs of Hobbes, and modern radicalism the heir of English republicanism, does it follow that their accounts of liberty are, like his, counterrevolutionary? Skinner doesn't say, but given Berlin's feline hostility to the left and Constant's opposition to the militants of his day, that seems a fair conclusion. At a minimum, Skinner suggests that their brand of tepid liberalism, which has achieved "predominance in Anglophone political philosophy"—not to mention the contemporary media and the Democratic Party—is one of the forces today preventing us from enjoying a fuller freedom. And though it may scandalize the *bien-pensant* of the center-left to hear this, their soft liberalism owes a good deal more to the spirit of Hobbesian counterrevolution than they realize.

Despite the progress from Clinton to Obama, the center-left is still reeling from the right-wing backlash against the New Deal and the Great Society. The obeisance it pays to safety and security, its preference for private over public goods, its fear of and contempt for democracy in the streets—these have been, since the second half of the nineteenth century, the impulses of the party of order, not the party of movement, and they owe their origins to Hobbes. Today they issue from a liberalism mugged by reaction.

For Hobbes, the more powerful the sovereign, the freer we are. Subjugation is emancipation.

If we read Skinner's footnotes more carefully, we see that the Hobbesian spirit also haunts the contemporary right. Hobbes's idea of freedom pervades libertarian discourse, and *Leviathan* casts a long shadow over the conservative vision of a night watchman state—where the government's primary purpose is to protect the citizenry from foreign attack and criminal trespass; where people are free to go about their business so long as they do not interfere with the movements of others; where contracts are enforced and security is ensured.

Libertarians will blanch at that association: whatever resonance Hobbesian ideas may find in their writings, the Hobbesian state is a good deal more repressive than any government they would ever countenance. Except for the fact that it's not. As Greg Grandin points out in *Empire's Workshop*, Milton Friedman met with Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in 1975 to advise him on economic matters; Friedman's Chicago Boys worked even more closely with Pinochet's junta. Sergio de Castro, Pinochet's finance minister, made the observation, reminiscent of Hobbes and Berlin, that "a person's actual freedom can only be ensured through an authoritarian regime that exercises power by implementing equal rules for everyone." Hayek admired Pinochet's Chile so much that he decided to hold a meeting of his Mont Pelerin Society in Viña del Mar, the seaside resort where the coup against Allende was planned. In 1978 he wrote to the London *Times* that he had "not been able to find a single person even in much maligned Chile who did not agree that personal freedom was much greater under Pinochet than it had been under Allende."

"Despite my sharp disagreement with the authoritarian political system of Chile," Friedman would later claim, "I do not regard it as evil for an economist to render technical economic advice to the Chilean Government." But the marriage between free markets and state terror cannot be annulled so easily. As Hobbes understood, it takes an enormous amount of repression to create the type of men who can exercise their "Liberty to buy, and sell, and otherwise contract with one another" without getting stroppy. They must be free to move—or choose—but not so free as to think about redesigning the highway. Assuming an all-too-easy congruence between capitalism and democracy, the libertarian overlooks just how much coercion is required to make citizens who will use their freedom responsibly and not ask the state to alleviate their distress.

It took Margaret Thatcher, of all people, to explain that to the libertarian right. As Naomi Klein recounts in *The Shock Doctrine*, when pressed by Hayek to pursue Pinochet's brand of shock therapy more aggressively, Thatcher responded, "I am sure you will agree that, in Britain with our democratic institutions and the need for a high degree of consent, some of the measures adopted in Chile are quite unacceptable." It was 1982, and British democracy being what it was, Thatcher had to go slow. But then came the Falklands War and the miners' strike. Once Thatcher realized that she could do to the miners and trade unions what she had done to President Galtieri and his Argentine generals—"We had to fight the enemy without in the Falklands and now we have to fight the enemy within, which is much more difficult but just as dangerous to liberty"—the stage was set for the full Hayekian monty. ■

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Suspended Sentences

by SCOTT SAUL

In 2005 the editors of the ecumenical poetry annual *Fulcrum* sent out a questionnaire on "poetry and truth" that ventured to ask the big questions, no matter how self-serious or old-fashioned they seemed: "What is poetry's essential nature (if any)?" for instance, and "How does poetry relate to the human condition?" For the nineteen poets and critics who responded, including Billy Collins, James Wood, Lyn Hejinian and Charles Bernstein, the exercise was something of a Rorschach test of their comfort with the questionnaire's elevated tone. Some matched its earnestness note for note ("Poetry, among all arts, probably comes closest to the search for truth since it expresses itself in language, which is the truth medium"—Russian poet Alexei Tsvetkov); some answered it with Steinian riddles ("The greatest poets….accomplish nothing, which is everything"—Hejinian); and some deflated it with absurdist humor ("Poetry is to truth like rubber to the rubber tree: it bounces"—Bernstein).

And then there was Eliot Weinberger, cultural critic and award-winning translator of Octavio Paz and Jorge Luis Borges, who pushed back against *Fulcrum*'s questions about poetry and truth with a story about poetry and the failures of criticism. (It is included in Weinberger's new collection of prose pieces, *Oranges and Peanuts for Sale*.) In sixteenth-century India, Weinberger's story goes, a poor but devout farmer enlists the god Shiva to write a poem for him so that he might win a prize of a thousand gold coins promised by the king of Madurai. Shiva does write a love poem, but the royal assembly rejects it for what seems to be a trivial reason: the poem describes a woman's hair as naturally fragrant and, according to the critic Natkira, the court's official aesthetic treatise does not allow for such a thing. When Shiva appears at the royal court to argue for his poem—its features, embellishment and sentiment—Natkira is unbending, pointing again to the treatise and its rule on the description of hair. At this point, Weinberger writes,

> the god became enraged and revealed his terrifying third eye of flame. The critic said, "I don't care if you have eyes all over your head. Your poem is no good." So Shiva cursed him and turned him into a leper.

Weinberger was clearly having some fun with *Fulcrum*'s questionnaire: instead of answers, he offered a booby-trapped parable, advising all critics to be wary of the dogmas they subscribe to, lest they find themselves on the wrong end of another summary judgment. But though there is a dash of humor to the parable (the unflappability of Natkira when confronted by Shiva's exposed third eye; the testiness of Shiva and the quick flick of his punishment), it's undeniably a revenge fantasy too. Critics often presume to wield control over the fate of artists, but here it's the artist, unbound by aesthetic and legal convention, who relishes the power to literally flame his critics. Which is fitting for Weinberger: he's the sort of critic who often takes up arms against other critics, speaking for an aesthetic vision that is like that "terrifying third eye"—normally hidden from sight but incandescent and disturbing when revealed. Creativity and castigation, invention and moral judgment, are the alpha and omega of Weinberger's work.

For some thirty-odd years now, Weinberger has been carving out his iconoclastic niche in our cultural landscape—or rather several iconoclastic niches. He has long been a sophisticated translator and ambassador of an international avant-garde, bringing innovative Latin American, Chinese and American poetries to a larger audience; and almost as long, he has been a witty but withering observer of the limits of American intellectual life (one persistent criticism being the lack of interest in innovative world literature). In the past decade, though—the years largely of the Bush regime—Weinberger has invested increasing energy into two other, seemingly disconnected projects. In one vein of work, he writes political commentary largely for export, dissecting and scourging American militarism ("The United States is a Banana Republic with a lot of money") in publica-

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Eliot Weinberger

Oranges and Peanuts for Sale
By Eliot Weinberger.
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An Elemental Thing
By Eliot Weinberger.
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Scott Saul, an associate professor of English and American studies at the University of California, Berkeley, is the author of Freedom Is, Freedom Ain't: Jazz and the Making of the Sixties. *He is writing a critical biography of Richard Pryor.*

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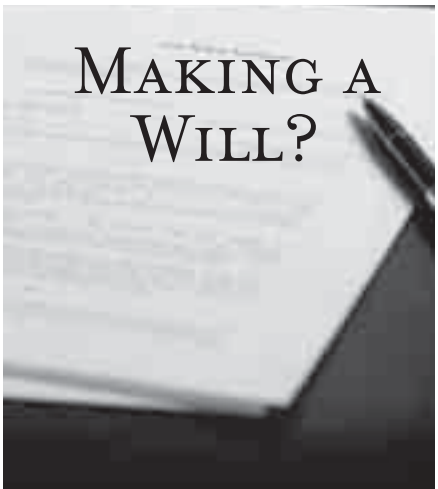

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tions from *As-Safir* (Lebanon) to *Zvědavec* (the Czech Republic). In another vein, he has intensified his experimentation with the form of the essay, bringing it closer to poetry and magical realism. Yet all of Weinberger's writings are held together by his signature style: cutting in its precision and ironic distance, erudite but uncluttered, clean.

Weinberger is best known for "What I Heard About Iraq," an essay that managed to bring together his commentator and experimentalist halves, applying principles of Modernist collage—more specifically the archival collage method of New York poet Charles Reznikoff—to the "truth decay" of the Bush years. Published in the *London Review of Books* on February 3, 2005, the essay went viral, eventually being linked to or reproduced on more than 100,000 websites; later that year it was adapted into a work of protest theater performed in locales as far-flung as Berlin, Calcutta, Durban and Los Angeles. It may be the most circulated piece of antiwar writing to emerge from the Iraq War.

Weinberger's method was to turn the 24/7 spin cycle on the war into a piece of found poetry, one that conjures up the war's absurdity rather than declaring it. Sound bites from global media are isolated, stripped down, then pieced back together—suspended sentence to suspended sentence—so that readers are served up the absurdity of the war in a bitterly concentrated dose. Here's a passage from the second installment of the essay, published January 5, 2006, in the *LRB*:

> I heard that, in Fallujah and elsewhere, the US had employed white phosphorus munitions, an incendiary device, known among soldiers as "Willie Pete" or "shake and bake", which is banned as a weapon by the Convention on Conventional Weapons. Similar to napalm, it leaves the victim horribly burned, often right through to the bone. I heard a State Department spokesman say: "US forces have used them very sparingly in Fallujah, for illumination purposes. They were fired into the air to illuminate enemy positions at night, not at enemy fighters." Then I heard him say that "US forces used white phosphorus rounds to flush out enemy fighters so that they could then be killed with high explosive rounds." Then I heard a Pentagon spokesman say that the previous statements were based on "poor information", and that "it was used as an incendiary weapon against enemy combatants." Then I heard the Pentagon say that white phosphorus was not an illegal weapon, because the US had never signed that provision of the Convention on Conventional Weapons.

Jon Stewart and the creative team at *The Daily Show* have broadcast this sort of media critique—illustrating how the corruption of language follows the corruption of power—to millions on a nightly basis. But "What I Heard About Iraq" is more disquieting than *The Daily Show*, partly because it doesn't offer the safety valve of shared laughter, and partly because it mirrors an almost shameful passivity. It tracks the twisting of the truth but is reticent on what to do about it; the narrative voice is a vacuum chamber that, registering all, is also unsettlingly inert. In fact, this may be the secret to the piece's success: unlike much agitprop, which calls upon its viewers or readers to do something, "What I Heard About Iraq" crystallized the feeling, shared by millions around the world, that the war was built on lies but that the truth was poor consolation to those, in Iraq, suffering in its grasp. The pathos of the war protester, alone and agape in front of the latest outrage on his or her computer screen, had found its literary form.

The pieces in *Oranges and Peanuts for Sale* cover a wide range of topics—the arts under the Bush administration, Obama's presidential campaign, ancient and contemporary Chinese poetry, the color blue, exoticism, the relationship between Samuel Beckett and Octavio Paz—but are knit together by a sensibility that prizes exactitude in its formulations yet is open to the unpredictable complications of the larger world. Put another way: weak prose and parochialism are two of Weinberger's chief enemies. One of the delights of reading his essays is that they reveal the interconnections between the two; the Wittgensteinian idea that the limits of one's language are the limits of one's world becomes, in his hands, a tool for revealing the blind spots common to our culture.

Or our critics. In *Oranges and Peanuts for Sale*, the self-assured yet clueless critic appears in various guises, only to be cut down to size by Weinberger's sharp pen. In his appreciative but tart assessment of Susan

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Sontag, he applauds her political courage and the cultural shift brought on by her *Illness as Metaphor* but comes down hard on her self-seriousness and the Eurocentricism of her critical imagination: "Like the old joke about the Oxford don, she knew everything, and nothing about everything else." Reviewing Robert Alter's new edition of the Psalms, Weinberger makes the renowned scholar seem arrestingly blinkered: "Based on the evidence here, Alter seems to know very little about the last hundred years of English-language poetry." Weinberger tends to use his own wide-ranging erudition as the stick by which other writers are measured, found wanting, then roughed up a bit.

Yet the attacks are not personal so much as cultural, a way to question what we value in our critics. The attack on Alter, for instance, is part of a larger, and welcome, brief against the fetish for "fidelity" among academic translators ("the primary task of a translator is not merely to get the dictionary meanings right—which is the easiest part—but rather to invent a new music for the text in the translation-language"). And the review ends evocatively rather than tendentiously, with a panoramic sketch of how the Psalms, in translation over the past five centuries, have set the paradigm for what ecstatic poetry should sound like. There's a refreshing current of irreverence that runs deep through Weinberger's polemics, a Robin Hood–like ethic that has him taking from those with cultural capital to give to those without it: Sontag and Alter may be taken down a few pegs, but less-known figures like Vicente Huidobro, Hans Faverey, Lorine Niedecker and Kenneth Cox are treated, conversely, with handsome admiration.

To be fair, there are moments in *Oranges and Peanuts for Sale* when Weinberger's assuredness fails him—when he seems to drop his ordinarily careful presentation of a critical case and shift into polemical overdrive. Given the task, in 2002, of introducing E.B. White's 1948 essay "Here Is New York" to the German readers of *Lettre International*, Weinberger took the occasion to meditate on how White's winsome style reflected his limitations and those of his longtime employer. Weinberger begins by observing that White's New York is "geographically minute"—much of it confined within a fifteen-block radius of *The New Yorker*'s offices on West Forty-third Street—then connects the smallness of White's tour to the small-mindedness of the magazine that published him. *The New Yorker*, Weinberger observes,

> is permanently fixed in an air of bemused detachment, which it expresses in a style whose sentences are pathologically rewritten by its editors, "polished" (as they call it) until every article, whether a report from Rwanda or a portrait of a professional dog-walker, sounds exactly alike, driven by domestic similes and clever turns of phrases that mix colloquial speech with unexpected synonyms. E.B. White was a master of the style, and it is a sign of the magazine's petrification—if it was ever not petrified—that his sentences from fifty years ago might have been published in last week's issue.

Weinberger's essay on White valuably broaches the costs of *The New Yorker*'s cleverness, the mysteries that it can screen out with its likably crisp prose; one wonders how American journalism might have evolved over the past decade if W.G. Sebald, rather than Malcolm Gladwell, offered the most lucrative working model. Yet Weinberger's conclusions also seem exaggerated. Can one essay encapsulate the whole of the magazine's history (especially when the essay in question was published not in *The New Yorker* but *Holiday*)? Is the house style of *The New Yorker* so uniform? (Ask the ghosts of John Updike and Pauline Kael.) And are Jane Mayer's articles about torture, Seymour Hersh's reports on military affairs and Jon Lee Anderson's dispatches from the outposts of the American empire all signs of "petrification"?

Perhaps inevitably, Weinberger the polemicist is a lumper rather than a splitter; sometimes, though, the lumping seems to come merely from his detached, bird's-eye vantage point rather than from an engagement with the complexity of the problem in question. In several essays Weinberger argues that academics in the humanities have lost their way, focusing on critical theory and bean-counting curricular reform at the expense of practical political engagement and aesthetic pleasure. And American writers, partly because of their ties to academia, are no better as citizens of the world:

> We are where we are in part because American writers—supposedly the most articulate members of society—have generally had nothing to say about the world for the last thirty years....
>
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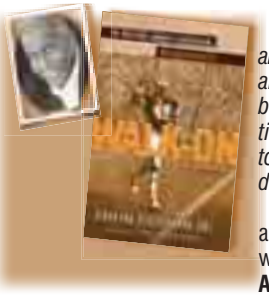

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> and knee-jerk demography and the personal as political and the impersonal as poetical, American writers now [in 2003] have the government we deserve.

Certainly this conclusion packs a wallop. But it also seems questionable, given that the "globalization" of the American novel has accelerated ever since, say, Russell Banks's *Continental Drift* (1985), which put an American working-class family and a family of Haitian refugees on an unforgettable and fatal collision course. Whatever one might think of such bestselling literary novels as Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, they have more than "nothing to say about the world." The conclusion is even more questionable since it's presented without much evidence to support it: here Weinberger lets his adversarial tone do all the work of establishing the authority of his argument. (Even Natkira took the trouble to point to a treatise.) He becomes, as he says of E.B. White, a "prisoner of his style"—bound to present himself as the Last Broad-Minded Man in America, bearing lonely witness to the world. Those who already agree with him will nod with pleasure at these takedowns of the American intelligentsia, but those who disagree will be unmoved.

Like an opera singer who can also belt the blues, Weinberger the polemicist has cultivated another, more enigmatic side, best illustrated by the prose poems of *An Elemental Thing*, which take folklore, cultural history and the anthropology of religion into the realm of magical realism. A short list of the subjects addressed in *An Elemental Thing* might include the four seasons, the wind, ice and the stars; animals from wrens and lizards to tigers and rhinos; the singing of New Zealand's Kaluli tribe and the dream language of a people indigenous to Chiapas; holy people from the prophet Muhammad to a seventeenth-century Catholic saint; and a woman who turns into a tree of flowers so that she might furtively make love to her husband. Weinberger considers *An Elemental Thing* a "serial essay," and there are motifs—the quest for spiritual purity, the fragility of the natural world, the cruelty of the powerful—that loosely link its individual essays to one another.

Still, it's the narrative point of view, rather than the subjects themselves, that lends *An Elemental Thing* its powerfully double sense of coherence and elusiveness. While the American essay, as a genre, is dominated by the "personal investigative essay"—the story of how the narrator came to learn something about himself, or his mother, or the giant squid—Weinberger is experimenting here with the "impersonal investigative essay" in which there is no "I" to frame the knowledge revealed and relate it to our time. His narrative voice is always felt but never easy to pin down.

Take, for instance, Weinberger's essay on Muhammad, which begins as a creation myth ("Four hundred and twenty-four thousand years before the creation of the heavens… God created the Light of Muhammad"), then recounts, in short and disconnected paragraphs, the incidents of the prophet's life. In Weinberger's telling, the Koran opens onto a magical, animistic world, both sublime and matter-of-fact:

> [Muhammad] split the moon in two and put it back together again. He made the sun rise just after it had set. He put a small stone in the middle of the road that no person or animal ever accidentally kicked.
>
> Another stone, lying on the mouth of a well in a garden, saluted him, and asked that it not become a stone in hell, and Muhammad prayed on its behalf.
>
> A camel complained to the prophet that he worked hard but was given little to eat. Muhammad summoned the camel's owner, who admitted it was true.

By withholding his own judgment in his poetic biography, Weinberger forces his readers to weigh for themselves the charisma of this Muhammad, who is part cosmic god, part St. Francis—and not so much a psychological person in his own right or a moral guidepost for the faithful. (Weinberger, one notes, has stripped out any commentary on the meaning of Muhammad's actions.) Rather, he makes Muhammad the occasion for a beguiling set of stories; he has largely taken Muhammad out of the realms of history, ethics and psychology and placed him in the world of literature. Muhammad's life becomes—to use one of Weinberger's favored tropes—a vortex, made up of fragments that converge and whirl without ever settling into a single pattern.

It may seem odd that a politically engaged critic like Weinberger is also a defender of the literary as a space of disjunction and ambiguity. But he advertises as much, in *Oranges and Peanuts for Sale*, when he offers the figure of Peruvian poet César Vallejo, who wrote both "propaganda prose" and avant-garde verse, as a model for his own career. Weinberger's political essays are exposés of fraudulent worlds; his prose poems are explorations of alternative ones, rich in their capacity to inspire wonder and complicated in their struggles with such "elemental things" as pain, death and the limits of an individual life. A song from Greenland voices a barren sense of the self:

> What lives within me?
> The great ice.
> I wish it would split in two.
>
> What lives within me?
> What lives within me?
> I wish it would go away.

In recovering Arctic poetry from another era, Weinberger has uncovered a sort of surrealist lyric, plangent in our own.

Yet Weinberger often makes these alternative worlds as violence-soaked as they are spellbinding. *An Elemental Thing* begins by throwing the reader into the Aztec time of the apocalypse—a year, repeated every fifty-two years, when the world threatened to end if the correct rituals were not observed. Everyone climbed onto rooftops and terraces so that no feet would touch the ground, and all eyes fixed on a hilltop temple, where priests sacrificed a prisoner, an individual free of blemishes, by slitting open his chest, pulling out his heart and setting it in a pyre. Afterward, people lunged at their own fires so that they might "be blessed with blisters."

The next day, the renewal of the world was welcomed with a confounding mixture of civility and brutality: "new mats were spread out, new hearthstones placed, incense lit, and honey-dipped amaranth seed cakes eaten by all. Quails were decapitated." It's hard to know what to make of this ritual, which is both successful on its face and disturbing in its reliance on innocent scapegoats, like those poor decapitated quails. Could it be that this Aztec world, rather than being an alternative to our world, simply cuts a surprising window onto it? That the victims sacrificed at the Aztec altar are not that far from the innocent civilians killed by white phosphorus rounds in Iraq? One thing is certain: no matter how many times you read *An Elemental Thing*, Eliot Weinberger won't be telling. ■

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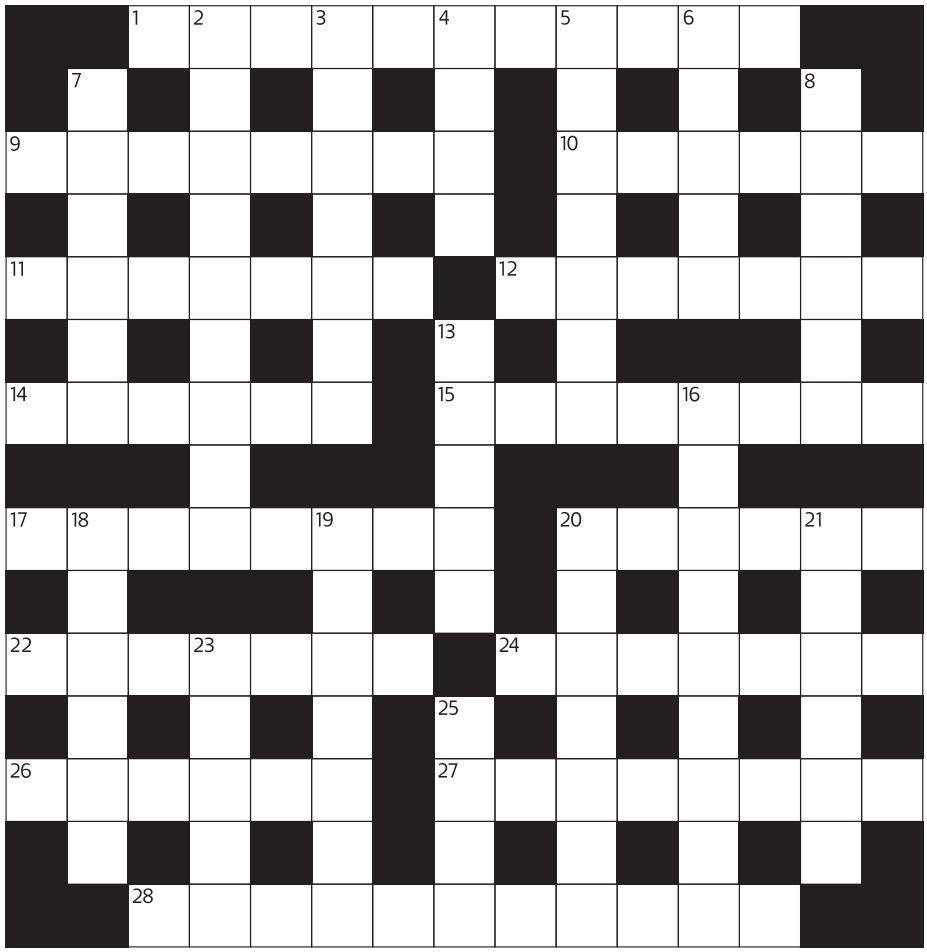

ACROSS

1 Certain crops could be so formulaic. (3,3,5)

9 and **19** down Not a dance hall gal, but one was thought of while a swagman watched his billy boil. (8,7)

10 Once they were 23, before they were 1 across. (6)

11 Having clothes on could be very exhausting! (7)

12 Not those old Burma Shave signs—just the opposite. (7)

14 What's the point in a religious law? It could be fired off with drastic results. (6)

15 Crooked lawyers start out being modest, but the rest's worse finally. (8)

17 Spurn me? A catastrophe! But he will save the day! (8)

20 In favor of "self" earlier. (6)

22 Par what? Confused about the place for brave conflict! (7)

24 Trials, alternatively good business propositions. (7)

26 Possibly dressed this way for Friday, two brief states around our country, when confused. (6)

27 Offering traditionally made on bended knee. (8)

28 Where a couple of fools got in, and had dinner? They could really kill you this way! (11)

DOWN

2 Talk about complete acne! (9)

3 Where a bridge dance was held? (7)

4 Going to them is unfortunate—especially with the Gods so crazy! (4)

5 How certain entertainers talk in a very casual way—fast! (7)

6 Put out by the definition? (5)

7 Picture the result of shooting with it! (6)

8 Mr. Bowdler shows scorn badly about one point. (6)

13 Slinging guns, I find, is just taking advantage of something. (5)

16 The way things happened when you were excluded this way! (6,3)

18 One from Salt Lake? (6)

19 See 9 across

20 Describing the maiden who kissed a man all tattered and torn in Jack's house. (7)

21 A reputedly balmy place, i.e., glad, as it could be. (6)

23 You'll have something of slump here—getting supposedly desirable things. (5)

25 Proving a musician's work is in the soup! (4)

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I Woke Up Every Morning Looking Like I Lost a Fight

Deep, dark circles under my eyes made me look exhausted and old. I tried every trick and treatment to get them to fade but nothing worked. It seemed like I was stuck with my "morning shiners," until I found a solution...

—By Pete Humes

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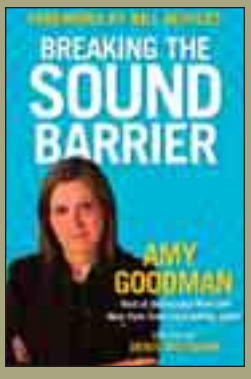

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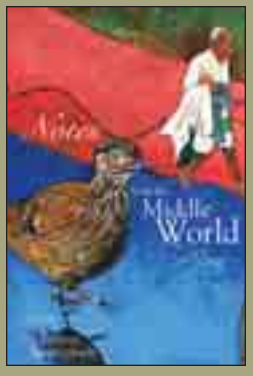

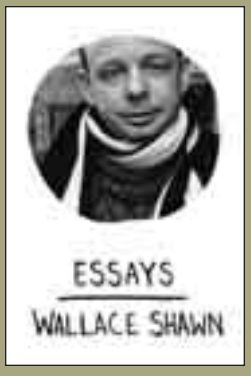

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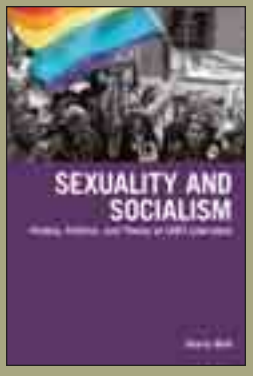

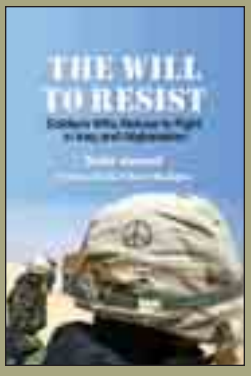

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